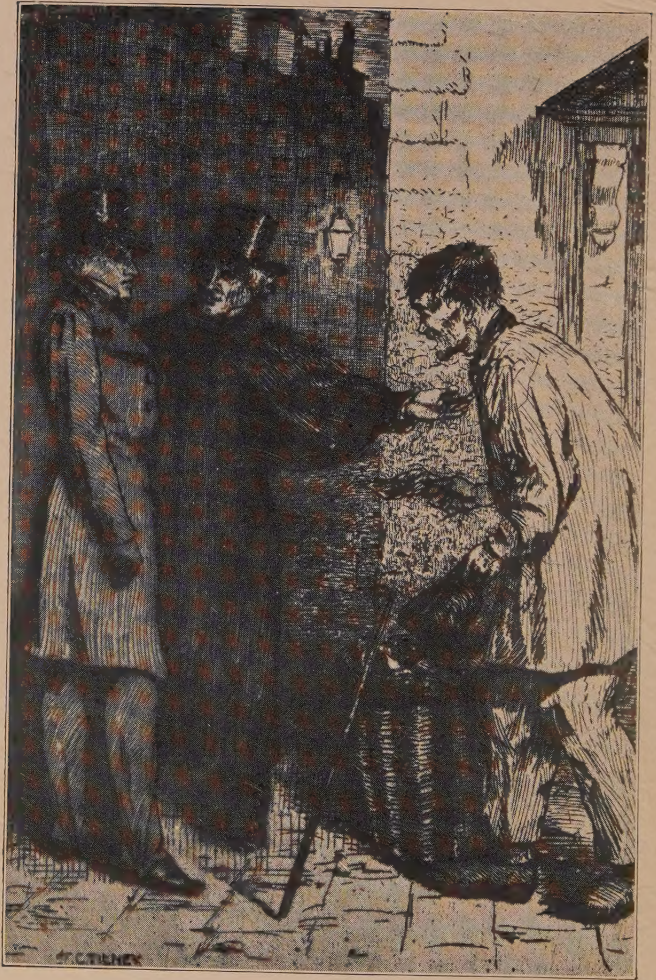


Dup.



One of those nightbirds was standing where the two men stopped

THE WORKS OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

Volume 4

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE
PIERRE GRASSOU

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PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

OR

MEDITATIONS OF AN ECLECTIC PHILOSOPHER ON CONJUGAL BLISS AND INFELICITY

DEDICATION

NOTE the words (page 35): "The superior man to whom this book is dedicated." Does that not mean: "It is dedicated to you"?

THE AUTHOR.

The woman who, lured by the title, might be tempted to open this book, might as well not do so, for, unknown to herself, she has already read it. No man, however malicious, will ever say as much good or as much evil of women as they think of themselves. If, in spite of this warning, a woman should persist in reading this work, delicacy ought to compel her not to speak ill of the author, since, depriving himself of the approvals which are most flattering to an artist, he has, so to speak, engraved on the frontispiece of his book the prudent inscription which is to be found on the doors of several establishments: *Ladies not admitted.*

INTRODUCTION

"MARRIAGE does not derive from Nature. The Oriental family differs in every respect from the Occidental family. Man is the minister of Nature, and society grafts itself upon the latter. Laws are made to suit customs and customs vary."

"Thus marriage can undergo the improvement to which all human matters are subject."

These words, uttered before the Council of State by Na-

poleon, at the time of the discussion of the Civil Code, greatly impressed the author of this book; and, unknown to himself, they perhaps created within him the germ of the work he is now offering to the public. Indeed, at the time when, much younger than he is now, he studied French law, the word *Adultery* gave rise in his mind to some peculiar impressions. Assuming gigantic proportions in the Code, this word never appeared to his imagination without lugubrious images following in its train. Shame, hatred, tears, terror, secret crimes, deadly wars, disrupted families, misfortune, became personified and rose before him when he used to read that sacramental *Adultery!* Later, when he frequented the most popular seaside resorts, the author noticed that the strictness of marital laws was generally mitigated by adultery. He found that unhappy marriages outnumbered by far the happy ones. In a word, he believed that he was the first to discover that, of all human notions, the marriage notion was the least advanced. But it was the observation of a young man; and with him, as with many others, similar to a stone flung into a lake, it lost itself in the turmoil of his seething thoughts. In spite of himself, however, the author observed; then, very slowly, a swarm of ideas more or less accurate on the nature of conjugal matters, began to form in his brain. Perhaps works are formed in human souls just as mysteriously as truffles grow in the fragrant plains of Périgord. From the initial and holy fear that adultery inspired in him, and from the observations he had thoughtlessly made, sprang, one fine morning, a tiny idea. It was a raillery on marriage: a husband and wife loved each other for the first time after twenty-seven years of wedded life.

This little conjugal pamphlet amused him and he spent a whole week grouping around this innocent epigram the multitude of thoughts that he had unconsciously acquired and that he was much surprised to discover. This fooling fell before a masterly remark. Obedient to advice, the author threw himself once more into the carelessness of his indolent habits. Nevertheless, that slight principle of science and jesting grew all alone in the fields of his thoughts;

every phase of the condemned work took root, and grew hardy, and remained like the bough of a tree which, left on an arid waste some winter's night, is covered the next day by those strange white crystallizations which the capricious frost of the night designs. Thus the sketch lived and became the starting point of a multitude of moral ramifications. It was like a polypus that engendered itself. The sensations of his youth, the observations that an opportune power allowed him to make, found points of support in the smallest events. Moreover, this mass of ideas was reduced to harmony, became animated and almost personified, so that it began to roam around in the fantastical lands wherein the soul likes to let its wild progeny wander. Through all the preoccupations of life and society, a voice made him the most startling revelations whenever he was looking with the greatest pleasure upon a smiling woman engaged in conversation or dancing. In the same way that Mephistopheles points out sinister figures to Faust, in the frightful assembly of Broken, the author felt a demon which, at a party, would come and tap him on the shoulder and say in a familiar way: "Dost see that smile? 'Tis the smile of hatred." At times, the demon would strut around like the heroes in Hardy's old comedies. He would shake the folds of an embroidered cloak and endeavor to restore the worn glitter and tinsel of glory. At times, he would laugh uproariously, like Rabelais, and trace on the wall of a house a word that could serve as pendant to "Drink," the only oracle to be obtained from the divine bottle. Often this literary Trilby would be seen sitting on a heap of books, pointing with his claw-like fingers to two yellow volumes whose glaring titles could easily be read. Then, when he noticed that the author was all attention, he would spell in a voice as grating as a harmonica: *Physiology of Marriage!*

But he would almost always appear at night, with dreams. As bewitching as a fairy, he would try to woo with soft words the soul he had subjected. As mocking as he was fascinating, as supple as a woman, as cruel as a tiger, his friendship was more to be feared than his hatred; for he did

not know how to caress without scratching. One night, among others, he tried the power of all his wiles and crowned them by one supreme effort. He came and sat down by the author's bed, like a love-sick girl who says not a word, but whose eyes shine and who ends by disclosing her secret.

"This," said he, "is the prospectus of a diver's suit with the help of which a man can walk on the Seine without wetting his feet. This other volume is the report of the Institute on a garment with which we can brave fire and not be burned. Won't you propose something that will preserve marriage from the misfortune of cold and heat? But listen! Here is the *Art of Preserving Foodstuffs*, the *Art of Preventing Chimneys Smoking*, the *Art of Making Good Mortar*, the *Art of Tying a Cravat*, the *Art of Carving*."

In one minute, he named such a prodigious number of books that the author was bewildered.

"Those myriads of books have been eagerly read," he continued; "and still, all people do not build, all people do not eat, all people do not own ties, nor do all people need a treatise on chimneys, but everybody marries a little. . . . But, behold! . . ."

His hand made a motion and seemed to uncover in the distance an ocean in which all the books of the century were bobbing about like so many waves. The 18mo rebounded, the 8mo which were being thrown in gave forth a deep sound, touched bottom and bobbed up again with infinite pains, being held down by the 12mo and the 32mo, which were present in great numbers and which soon reduced themselves to foam. The furious breakers carried journalists, readers, printers, printers' devils, whose heads could be seen bobbing above the books. Thousands of voices could be heard, like those of boys in bathing. A few men in boats drifted hither and thither, picking up the volumes and bringing them to a tall, dry, contemptuous-looking personage all garbed in black: it was the public and the publishers. With his finger, the demon pointed to a boat under full sail, freshly decked with pennants, and carrying a sign intended for a flag: then, with a sardonic laugh, he read in a shrill voice: *Physiology of Marriage*.

The author fell in love, but the Devil let him alone, for he would have been worsted had he come back to a place inhabited by a woman. Several years passed without bringing any other worries but those of love, and the author had reason to believe that he had been cured of one ill by another. But, one evening, he found himself in a salon in Paris when one of the men who form the circle that gathers around the mantelpiece, began to speak and related the following anecdote in a sepulchral voice:

“This happened in Gand at the time when I was there. A lady, a widow, attacked by a mortal disease for the past ten years, was lying on her deathbed. Her last breath was anxiously awaited by three collateral heirs, who would not stir a step for fear that she might make a will in favor of a convent of the town. The sick woman was silent and appeared to be dozing, and Death was stealing slowly over her mute and ghastly face. Can you not see the three silent relatives sitting by the bedside that winter’s night? An old nurse is there, too, nodding her head, and the doctor, seeing that his patient has arrived at the last stage, holds his hat in one hand and with the other makes a motion that signifies: ‘This is my last visit.’ A solemn silence prevailed and one could hear the dull sound of the snow falling on the shutters. Fearing that the light might inconvenience the dying woman, the youngest of the heirs had fitted a shade to the candle placed near the bed, so that the luminous circle barely reached the funereal pillow on which the livid face of the sick woman detached itself like a dim gilt Christ on a tarnished silver cross. The glimmerings thrown by the blue flames of a grate-fire alone illumined the dark room where a drama was about to take place. Indeed, a log rolled from the fireplace onto the floor, as if it were an omen of some event. At the noise, the sick woman awakens and sits up in bed; she opens eyes as bright as a cat’s, and everyone gazes at her in amazement. She watches the progress of the burning log; and before anybody has even thought of opposing her movement, produced by a sort of delirium, she leaps out of bed, snatches the tongs and hurls the log back into the fireplace. The nurse, the

doctor and the relatives jump forward, take the dying woman in their arms and lay her gently on the bed; she leans her head back on the pillow and expires shortly afterward, with her eyes, even in death, riveted on the spot where the log had rolled. Hardly had the Countess von Ostroem breathed her last, before the three heirs looked at each other suspiciously and, forgetting their aunt, they indicated to one another the mysterious floor. As they were Belgians, calculations followed close on their glance. It was arranged, by a few words spoken in a low tone, that not one of them was to leave the room. A flunkey was dispatched to summon a carpenter. Those collateral souls trembled with eagerness, when, gathered about the rich floor, they watched the apprentice cut the wood.

“‘My aunt made a gesture,’ said the youngest of the heirs.

“‘No, it is the effect of the light,’ replied the oldest one, with one eye on the treasure and the other on the dead woman.

“The afflicted relatives found, exactly at the spot where the log had lain, a mass cunningly covered with a layer of plaster.

“‘Go ahead,’ said the old heir.

“The tool of the apprentice then disclosed a human head, and I do not know what remnant of a garment which led them to recognize the Count, whom the whole town believed to be dead in Java and whose loss had been greatly mourned by his wife.”

The narrator of this story was a tall, spare man with hazel eyes and brown locks, and the author thought he perceived sundry resemblances between him and the demon who had so tormented him; but the stranger did not have a cloven foot. Suddenly, the word *Adultery* reached the author's ears; and then, that sort of bell awakened in his imagination the most lugubrious figures of the procession which, in the past, always defiled after those illusive syllables.

From that time on, the phantasmagorical persecutions of a work which did not exist, began all over again; and, at no other period of his life was the author so besieged with

fallacious ideas on the fatal subject of the book. But he resisted the demon bravely, although the latter seemed to connect the slightest events of life with the unknown work and, like a customs officer, stamped everything with his ironical initial.

Several days later, the author found himself in the company of two ladies. The first one had been one of the most amiable and witty women of Napoleon's court. Having attained a high social position, the Restoration dethroned her; then she became a hermit. The second lady, young and fair, was playing, at the time, the part of a woman of fashion. They were friends because, one being forty years old and the other twenty-two, their pretensions rarely clashed on the same grounds. The author was of no consequence to one of these ladies, and as the other one had divined him, they continued in his presence a rather frank chat they were having regarding their profession of women.

"Have you noticed, my dear, that, as a general thing, women only love fools?"

"What are you saying, Duchess? and how can you make this remark agree with the pronounced aversion they feel for their husbands?"

"Why, it is tyranny!" said the author to himself. "So here is the demon in petticoats?"

"No, my dear, I am not jesting," replied the Duchess, "and really, it is enough to make a body tremble since I have looked dispassionately upon the people I used to know. Wit always has a brilliancy that hurts one's feelings, and the man who possesses much wit frightens us; if he be proud, he will not be jealous, and therefore could never please us. And then, we perhaps prefer to raise a man to our position than to ascend to his. . . . Talent has many triumphs it can share with us, but the dull man gives pleasure, and we always prefer to hear: 'There goes a handsome man!' than to see our lovers become members of the Institute."

"Ah! Duchess, enough; you have thoroughly frightened me!"

And the young coquette, passing in review all the lovers whom her acquaintances were mad about, failed to find one clever man among the lot.

"Why, on my virtue," she exclaimed, "their husbands are better . . ."

"But those people are *husbands*," the Duchess gravely rejoined.

"Still," inquired the author, "is the misfortune which, in France, threatens all husbands, absolutely unavoidable?"

"Yes," replied the Duchess, with a laugh. "And the animosity of certain women toward those who own to the happy misfortune of having a passion, proves that the burden of chastity lies heavily upon them. Were it not that she fears the Devil, one would be Laïs; the other one owes her virtue to her coldness of heart; still another one, to the manner in which her first lover conducted himself; this one . . ."

The author checked this torrent of revelations by communicating to the two ladies the plan which pursued him; they smiled and promised much advice. The young one gayly furnished the first capital for the enterprise by saying that she would mathematically prove that those women who are entirely virtuous are creatures of reason.

On reaching home, the author then said to his demon:

"Come! I am ready. Let us sign the agreement!"

The demon then vanished forever.

If the author writes down the biography of his book here, it is not through any inspiration of fatuity.

He relates facts which may be of service in the history of human thought and which will, without a doubt, explain the work itself. It may not be a matter of indifference to certain anatomists of thought to know that the soul is feminine.

Thus, as long as the author determined that he would not think of the book he was going to write—the book appeared written everywhere. He would come across a page lying on the bed of a sick friend, and find another one on the

sofa of a boudoir. The glances of waltzing women suggested ideas; a gesture, a word, fertilized his scornful brain. The day he said to himself: "This work which so obsesses me, shall be accomplished!" everything fled; and, like the three Belgians, he found a skeleton where he expected to discover a treasure.

A pale and lovely face succeeded the tempting demon; it had charm and cordiality and its representations were devoid of the sharp shafts of criticism. It lavished more words than ideas and seemed to dread noise. Perhaps it was the good genius of the honorable deputies who sit in the very center of the Chamber.

"Is it not better," said she, "to leave things as they are? Are they so bad? One should believe in marriage as in the immortality of the soul; and you are certainly not going to write a book lauding matrimonial felicity. Besides, you will no doubt draw your conclusions from a thousand Parisian households which are exceptions. Perhaps you will find some husbands willing to hand over their wives to you; but no son will hand over his mother . . .

"A few people, hurt by the opinions you are going to profess, will suspect your conduct and denounce your intentions. And lastly, in order to tamper with the sores of the body social, one should be a king or at least a First Consul."

Although she appeared in the guise most acceptable to the author, Reason was not heeded; for, in the distance, Folly was shaking the hobby of Panurge and he wanted to snatch it; but, when he tried to seize it, he found that it was as heavy as the club of Hercules; besides, the curé of Meudon had embellished it in such a manner, that a young man who prides himself more on being properly gloved than on writing a book, could not touch it.

"Well, is our work finished?" asked the younger of the author's two accomplices.

"Alas! madame, will you reward me for all the hatred it may arouse against me?"

She made a gesture and then the author replied to her hesitancy by an expression of unconcern.

"What! you hesitate? Publish it and do not be afraid. Nowadays, we read a book more for its style than for the material it contains."

Although, in this instance, the author is only the humble secretary of two ladies, he has, while engaged in co-ordinating and recording their observations, accomplished more than one task. Perhaps, as regards marriage, only one remained to be accomplished, and that was to gather the things that everyone thinks and that no one utters; but by making use, in a study of this kind, of everybody's thoughts, does one not run the risk of not pleasing anyone? However, the eclectism of this study may save it. While mocking at some things, the author has endeavored to popularize several comforting ideas. He has almost always attempted to awaken unknown springs in the human soul. While defending the most material interests, judging or condemning them, he has perhaps given a glimpse of more than one intellectual delight. Yet, the author has not the foolish presumption of having always succeeded in making elegant jests; he has only counted on the diversity of minds, to receive as much blame as approval. The matter was so grave, that he has constantly tried to *anecdote* it, as, nowadays, anecdotes are passports for all teachings and the anti-narcotic for all books. In this one, where everything is analysis and observation, fatigue in the reader, and the *I* in the author, were unavoidable. It is one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a work, and the author has not striven to conceal it from himself. He has therefore arranged the rudiments of this lengthy study so that the reader may find a break here and there. This system was consecrated by a writer who made on *Taste* a study in many respects similar to the one the author was making on *Marriage*, and of whom he will take the liberty of borrowing a sentence to express an idea which is common to both of them. It will be a sort of tribute rendered to a predecessor whose death followed close upon his success:

"When I write and speak of myself in the singular, the

fact supposes a confabulation with the reader; he may examine, discuss, doubt and even laugh; but, when I arm myself with the formidable *we*, I am professing, and I require submission.”—(BRILLAT-SAVABIN, preface of *Physiology of Taste*.)

December 5, 1829.

PART FIRST

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

“We shall talk against insane laws until they are revised, and in the meantime, we blindly submit to them.”—
(DIDEROT, *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville*.)

MEDITATION I

THE SUBJECT

PHYSIOLOGY, what do you want with me?

Is it not your aim to demonstrate that marriage unites for life two beings who are strangers to one another?

That life is in passion, and that no passion survives marriage?

That marriage is an institution necessary to the preservation of society, but that it is contrary to natural laws?

That divorce, that admirable palliative of marital ills, will be unanimously clamored for?

That, in spite of its drawbacks, marriage is the original source of property?

That it offers inestimable pledges of security to governments?

That there is something touching in the association of two beings to weather the storms of life?

That it is ridiculous to expect an only thought to direct two wills?

That woman is treated like a slave?

That no marriage is absolutely cloudless?

That constancy is impossible, at least for a man?

That, if it were possible to make a general report, more troubles than security would be found in the patrimonial transmission of property?

That the faithlessness of woman dates back to the beginning of society and that marriage has survived this constant succession of frauds?

That the laws of love bind two beings so strongly together that no human law can part them?

That, if there are marriages recorded on the public registers, there are others formed by natural inclinations, by a happy similarity or a complete dissimilarity of thought and by bodily conformations; so that heaven and earth are in constant contradiction?

That there are handsome, manly and superior husbands, whose wives have ugly, diminutive and dull lovers?

All these questions might well furnish subjects for so many books, but the books have been written and the questions are being perpetually solved.

Physiology, what do you want with me?

Do you reveal new principles? Do you contend that we are to treat women as common property? Lycurgus and several Grecian tribes, Tartars and savages, tried it.

Should we guard our women closely? The Ottomans did it, and to-day they are setting them free again.

Should we make girls wed without a dowry and exclude them from our wills? . . . English authors and moralists have proven that, in co-operation with divorce, this scheme is the best means of making marriages turn out happily.

Should there be a little Hagar in each household? No law is required for that. The article of the Code which imposes penalties upon the adulterous woman, in whatever place the crime be committed, and the one which only punishes the husband if the concubine reside under the conjugal roof, implicitly admits mistresses *en ville*.

Sanchez has disserted on all the punishable cases of the married state; he has even argued on the opportuneness and legitimacy of each pleasure; he has outlined all the moral, religious and material duties of the consorts; in a word, his work would comprise twelve volumes 8mo if the ponderous infolio bearing the title *De Matrimonio* were to be reprinted.

Swarms of lawyers have launched swarms of treatises on

the legal knots that marriage creates. There are even some works on the judicial congress.

Legions of physicians have published legions of books on marriage in relation to surgery and medicine.

In the nineteenth century, the physiology of marriage is either an insignificant compilation or else the work of a fool, written for other fools; hoary priests have taken their golden scales and weighed the slightest scruples; hoary lawyers have put on their spectacles and distinguished all the species; hoary physicians have taken their scalpels and probed the sores; hoary judges have ascended the bench and judged all redhibitory cases; entire generations have passed, crying out in joy or in grief; each century has cast its vote into the ballot-box; the Holy Ghost, the poets, the writers have recorded all, from Eve to the Trojan war, from Helen of Troy to Madame de Maintenon, from the wife of Louis XIV. to the contemporaneous woman.

Physiology what do you want with me?

Do you want, by chance, to show me, with the aid of more or less well-drawn pictures, that a man marries:

Out of ambition . . . that is well known;

Out of kindness of heart, to snatch a girl from her mother's rule;

Out of anger, to disinherit collaterals;

Out of contempt for a faithless mistress;

Out of lassitude for the delightful life of a bachelor;

Out of folly, for it is always a folly;

On account of a bet, as was the case with Lord Byron;

On account of honor, like Georges Dandin;

Out of interest, but 'tis almost always out of that;

Out of youth, on leaving college, through sheer thoughtlessness;

On account of ugliness and the fear that some day he may lack a woman;

Out of machiavellism, in order to inherit an old woman's fortune;

Out of necessity, in order to give a name to *our* son;

Out of duty, because the damsel has been weak;

Out of passion, in order to be more surely cured;

On account of a quarrel, to end a suit;
Out of gratitude, it is giving more than one has received;
Out of wisdom, it still happens to doctrinary people;
On account of a will, when a departed uncle has added
a marriageable girl to his legacy;
Out of tradition, to emulate one's ancestors;
On account of old age, to make a fitting end?

(There is no *x*, and it is perhaps because it is so seldom used at the beginning of a word, that it has been taken for the sign of the *unknown*.)

Out of *yatidi*, which is Turkish for bedtime and also implies the various needs of that time;

Out of religious zeal, like the Duc de Saint-Aignan, who did not wish to sin?

But these accidents have furnished subjects for thirty thousand comedies and one hundred thousand novels.

Physiology, for the third and the last time, what do you want with me?

Here, everything is as commonplace as cobblestones, as vulgar as a crossroad.

Marriage is better known than Barabbas of the Passion; all the old ideas it awakens have been current in literature since the world's beginning, and there is no useful opinion or strange plan, that has not found its way to an author, a printer, a publisher, and a reader.

Allow me to say to you, like our Master Rabelais:

"Good people, may the Lord save and keep you! Where are you? I cannot see you. Wait until I put on my spectacles. Ah! ah! I see you now. You, and your good wives and children are in the best of health? I am pleased."

But I do not write for you. As long as you have grown children, that ends the matter.

Ah! 'tis you, illustrious drinkers; you, precious gouty ones, and you tireless revelers and spicy exquisites, who feast all day and have your own gallant magpies and go at tierce, at nones, and likewise at vespers, at complines, and would, if you could, go forever.

It is not to you that I address the *Physiology of Marriage*, for you are not married.

Amen forever!

You, lot of bigots, snails, hypocrites, canting rascals, and the likes of you who are disguised to deceive the world! . . . Avaunt, cringing knaves, out of the quarry! Out of here, you fuddle-brains! By the Devil, are you still there? . . .

Perhaps there only remains for me the good souls fond of a hearty laugh. None of those whining fools, who, on every occasion, want to drown themselves in verse and prose and write sickly odes, sonnets and meditations; none of those dreamers of all kinds, but a few of those old pantagruelists who are not over careful when there is any festivity on hand, who admire the book of the *pois au lard*, *cum commento* of Rabelais, and the one on the dignity of flaps, and who properly esteem these truly fine works.

We can no longer laugh at the Government, my friends, since it has found a way of raising fifteen millions of taxes.

The popes, the bishops, the monks and the sisters are not rich enough to entertain us; but let Saint Michael who chased the Devil out of heaven come, and perhaps we may see good times again! Consequently, we have nothing to laugh at in France, at present, but marriage.

Disciples of Panurge, you alone I wish to have as readers. You alone know how to pick up and drop a book, how to understand veiled meanings and to extract nourishment from a medullar bone.

Those people with microscopes who only see one side, the censors, in a word, have they really passed everything in review and said all there was to be said? Have they decided finally that it is as impossible to execute a book on marriage as it is to make a new jug out of a broken one?

Yes, master crank. Press marriage and nothing will ever flow from it but pleasure for the bachelors and worry for the husbands. That is the eternal moral. A million printed pages could contain nothing else.

However, here is my first proposition: Marriage is a furious struggle before which the consorts crave the blessing of Heaven, because, to love always is the most daring of enterprises; the struggle begins at once, and victory,

that is to say, freedom, belongs to the most skillful combatant.

I agree with you. Where do you find anything new in this conception?

Well, I address myself to the married men of yesterday and to-day, to those who, emerging from the church or the mayor's office, conceive the hope of always keeping their wives for themselves; to those who, on account of some strange and undefinable egotism, always say when they see the misfortunes of other people: "That will never happen to me!"

I address myself to those seafarers who, after they have seen many a shipwreck, venture on the high seas themselves; to those bachelors who, after having caused many a matrimonial catastrophe, dare to get married. And here is the subject, eternally new, eternally old!

A young man, or perhaps an old one, in love or not, has just acquired by a contract duly recorded in the mayor's office, in heaven and in the books of the dominion, a young girl with flowing hair, gleaming black eyes, tiny feet, tapering fingers, ruddy lips, pearly teeth and a pretty figure, one who is appetizing and coquettish, as white as a lily, and endowed with all the most desirable attractions of beauty; her lashes resemble the spikes of the crown of iron, her skin, as fresh as a white camelia, is tinted with the carmine of the scarlet blossom; on her virginal countenance, the eye detects the bloom of a young fruit and the imperceptible down of a peach; the blue veins distill a rich glow through the clear tissues; she demands and gives life; she is all joy and innocence. She loves her husband, or at least she thinks she does. . . .

The enamored bridegroom says to himself: "Those eyes will shine only for me, those lips will tremble only for me, that soft hand will pour the treasures of voluptuousness only over me, that breast will heave only at my approach, that sleeping soul will awaken only at my bidding, I alone will bury my hands in the shining masses of this hair, I alone will dreamily caress that beautiful head. I will have Death watch at my bedside to protect my nuptial couch from the depredations of strangers; that throne of love shall

float in the blood of any imprudent man, or in mine own. Tranquillity, honor, happiness, paternal ties, the fortune of my children, everything is there; I shall defend it as a lioness protects her young. Woe to him who ventures into my lair!"

Well, brave athlete, we applaud your purpose. Until now no geometrician has dared to trace lines of longitude and latitude over the marital sea. The old husbands were ashamed to point out the sand-banks, reefs, rocks, shoals, coasts and currents which destroyed their crafts. The married pilgrims lacked a guide, a compass . . . this book shall serve as such. Without mentioning tradespeople and shopkeepers, there are so many persons who, in order to pass the time, occupy themselves with trying to find out the secret reasons which govern women's actions, that it is a charity to class all the secret situations of marriage by chapters and titles. A good table of contents will permit them to lay their finger on the heartbeats of their wives, just like the table of logarithms teaches them the sum of a multiplication.

Well, what do you think of it? Is it not a new enterprise, and one that every philosopher has given up, to show how a woman can be prevented from deceiving her husband? Is it not the comedy of comedies? Is it not another *speculum vitæ humanæ*? There is no longer any question about the idle propositions we have done justice to in this meditation; nowadays, with regard to morality as with regard to the exact sciences, the century requires facts and observations . . . we furnish them.

Let us begin by examining the real state of affairs, by analyzing the forces of each party. Before arming our imaginary champion, let us calculate the number of his foes, and count the Cossacks who want to invade his little kingdom.

Let come with us who will, let those laugh who may. Weigh the anchor, hoist the sails! You at least know your starting-point! It is a great advantage that we have over a large number of books!

As regards our whim to laugh whilst we cry and to cry whilst we laugh, like the divine Rabelais who drank whilst

he ate and ate whilst he drank; as regards our mania to put Democritus and Heraclitus in the same page, to have neither style, nor premeditation, nor phrases—if any of the crew should demur!—Overboard with the old fogies, the classics in tights, the romantics in shrouds, and let come what may!

All those cranks will perhaps reproach us for resembling those people who joyfully exclaim: “I’m going to tell you a funny story.” “. . . As if we could jest regarding marriage! Have you not already guessed that we consider it in the light of a slight disease to which we are all subject and that this book is its monography?”

But you, your galley or book, look like those postilions who make their whips crack when they leave relay-stations because they have English people aboard. You will not have galloped a mile before you will have to get down to mend a trace or to rest your horses. Why blow your horn before you have won?

Eh! my dear pantagruelists, nowadays it is sufficient to have pretensions to success in order to obtain it; and, after all, great works are only the elaboration of carefully studied small ideas! I do not see why I am not able to gather laurels if only to wind around those salty hams which will help us to empty the wine-jugs. Just a moment, pilot! Do not let us start without first making a little definition.

Readers, if here and there in this book, like in the world, you come across the words virtue or virtuous women, let us agree that virtue will be that painful ease with which a married woman reserves her heart for her husband; unless the word be used in a general sense, a distinction which we will leave to the natural sagacity of each reader.

MEDITATION II

CONJUGAL STATISTICS

THE Administration, for the past twenty years, has been trying to determine how many acres of woods, fields, vineyards and fallow-land are contained in the soil of France.

It did not stop there and has also wanted to know the number and nature of the animals. Scientists have gone even further; they have counted the measures of wood, the kilogrammes of beef, the quarts of wine, the apples and eggs consumed in Paris. But nobody has yet thought, either in the name of marital honor, or in the interest of marriageable people, or for the advantage to morality and the improvement of human institutions, of looking into the number of good women. What! the French Cabinet, questioned, can reply that France has so many men in the army, so many spies, so many clerks, so many school-children; but, as to virtuous women—nothing? If a king of France suddenly developed the idea of seeking his august mate among his subjects, the Administration could not even indicate the majority of spotless lambs from which he might choose? It would be compelled to refer him to some institution of *rosières*, a fact which would cause a good deal of merriment.

Are the ancients, then, to be considered our masters in political institutions, as they are in morality? History tells us that Ahasuerus, wishing to find a wife among the daughters of Persia, chose Esther, the fairest and most virtuous of all. His ministers must necessarily have found a way to sift the population. Unfortunately, the Bible, so clear on every matrimonial question, has omitted to give us that law on conjugal election.

Let us endeavor to make up for the silence of the Administration, by establishing the number of women in France. At this point we crave the attention of all the supporters of public morality, and make them judges of our proceedings.

We will try to be generous enough in our estimates, exact

enough in our arguments, to make everyone acknowledge the result of this analysis.

There are about thirty million inhabitants in France.

A few naturalists believe that the number of women exceeds the number of men; but, as a great many statisticians hold a contrary view, we will take the most likely calculation and concede a population of fifteen million women.

We will begin by subtracting from this total about nine million creatures who, at first sight, seem to bear quite a likeness to woman, but whom a searching examination has compelled us to reject.

We will explain our meaning.

Naturalists consider man a unique species of that bimanous tribe established by Duménil in his *Zoologie Analytique*, page 16, and to which Bory de Saint-Vincent felt compelled to add the orang-outang species, under pretense of completing it.

If those zoologists only see in us a mammal with thirty-two vertebræ, possessing a hyoid bone, and more cells in the cerebral hemispheres than any other animal; if, for them, no other differences exist in that tribe but those produced by the influences of climate, which have furnished fifteen species, the scientific names of which it would be idle to quote, the physiologist must also have the right to establish his tribes and sub-tribes, in accordance with certain degrees of intelligence and certain moral and pecuniary conditions of existence.

Now, the nine million beings which are occupying us at present, show at first sight all the characteristics peculiar to the human race; they have the hyoid bone, the coracoid beak, the acromion and the zygomatic arch: therefore, the gentlemen of the Jardin des Plantes are quite welcome to class them in the bimanous tribe; but that we should look upon them as women!—that is what the Physiology will never do.

For us and for those to whom this book is destined, a woman is a rare variety of the human species, whose principal physiological characteristics are the following:

The species is due to the special care that men have been

able to lavish on its development, thanks to the power of gold and the moral warmth of civilization. It can be generally recognized by the whiteness, softness and fine texture of the skin. Its natural inclination is toward extreme cleanliness. Its fingers abhor the touch of anything which is not soft, smooth and perfumed. Like the ermine, it sometimes dies of grief when its white robes have been soiled. It likes to smooth its hair and pour sweet scents upon it, trim and polish its nails and frequently bathe its delicate limbs. During the night, it is only happy when reclining on the softest of beds; during the day, when it is reposing on hair sofas; accordingly, the horizontal position is the one which most appeals to it. Its voice is very sweet and its motions are full of grace. It speaks with marvelous facility. It undertakes no hard work; and yet, in spite of its apparent weakness, there are burdens it can move and shoulder with miraculous ease. It flies from the glare of the sun and protects itself from its rays by the most ingenious devices. Walking tires it. Does it ever eat? That remains a mystery. Does it share the needs of other species? That is a problem. Exceedingly curious, it lets itself be easily captured by anyone who conceals the slightest thing from it, for its mind induces it constantly to seek the unknown. To love is its religion; it thinks only of pleasing the one it loves. To be loved, is the aim of all its actions; to excite desire, the aim of all its gestures. Therefore, it only thinks of ways to shine; it moves only in a sphere of grace and elegance; it is for this species that the young Indian woman has spun the soft coat of the Thibet goats, that Tarare has woven its gossamer veils, that Brussels has made its spools of finest flax revolve, that Visapour has extracted shining pebbles from the bowels of the earth and that Sèvres has gilded its snow-white clay. Day and night it devises new ornaments; it employs its life starching dresses and making sashes. It sallies forth brilliant and fresh to show itself off to strangers whose tributes flatter, whose desires intoxicate it, although the strangers themselves are a matter of indifference. The hours it steals from embellishment and voluptuousness are given over to the

pastime of singing sweet airs; it is for Woman that France and Italy have organized their delightful concerts and Naples has given a harmonious soul to the strings of its instruments. In a word, Woman is queen of the world and slave of a desire. She fears marriage because it finally spoils her figure, but she accepts it because it promises happiness. If she bears children, it is only by chance, and when they are grown, she hides them.

These characteristics, chosen haphazard amid a thousand, are they to be found in the creatures whose hands are as knotty as baboons' and whose skin is as dark as the old parchments of an *olim*; whose faces are tanned by the sun, whose necks are flabby and wrinkled; who are clothed in rags; whose voices are harsh, whose intellects are *nil*, whose odor is insufferable; who only think of the daily task, whose backs are constantly bent over the soil; who dig, harrow, make hay, harvest, glean, strip hemp, and knead bread; who, herded with cattle, men and children, live in holes badly covered with straw; to whom it is a matter of small consequence whence come all the children they bear? To produce a great many so as to hand them over to lifelong labor and misery is their whole task; and if their love is not a toil, like their labors in the fields, it is at least a speculation.

Alas! if the world is full of storekeepers' wives who sit all day among candles and sugar, of farmers' wives who milk cows, of miserable wretches who are used as beasts of burden in factories or who carry a hod, a hoe or a basket; if, unfortunately, there exist too many vulgar creatures to whom the life of the soul, the advantages of education, the delightful storms of the heart are an unattainable paradise, and if Nature has willed that they should possess a hyoid bone and thirty-two vertebræ, let them remain for the physiologist in the orang tribe! We are only stipulating for the idle classes, for those who have the time and wit to love, for the rich who have purchased the monopoly of passions, for the intellects that have conquered the monopoly of love. We anathemize all that does not live through thought. We consider rubbish all that is not young, ardent, lovable and passionate. This is the public

expression of the secret sentiment of all philanthropists who can read or who own their carriages. In the nine million rejected ones, the tax-collectors, lawmakers and priests no doubt see so many souls, so many government subjects, taxpayers and law-breakers; but the man with sentiment, the boudoir philosopher, whilst eating the bread sown and harvested by these very creatures, will nevertheless reject them just as we do, from the class to which Woman belongs. For them, no woman who cannot inspire love exists; for them, there is only one being who, through a privileged education, has been invested with the priesthood of thought and in whom idleness has developed the power of imagination; in a word, there exists no other creature but the one whose soul dreams of finding as many intellectual as physical delights in love.

We wish, however, our readers to note that those nine million female pariahs now and then produce thousands of peasant girls who are as fair as angels; they land in Paris or some other large city and end by attaining the rank of ladies; but, for these one or two thousand privileged creatures, there are one hundred thousand others who remain servants or who throw themselves into the most dreadful debauches. Nevertheless, we will give the feminine population credit for these village Pompadours.

The first calculation is based upon the discovery of the statisticians that there are eighteen million poor people, ten million people comfortably off, and two million rich people in France. So there are only six million women to whom refined men are, have been, and always will be, attracted.

Let us submit this social élite to a philosophical analysis. We take it, that married people who have been wedded twenty years can rest quietly without having to worry over love matters and the scandal of a suit based on statutory grounds. Of these six million individuals, we must deduct about two million very charming women, because, at forty-odd years they know the world; but, as they cannot affect masculine hearts, they are outside of the question we are investigating. If they have the misfortune not to be sought for their amiability, they are bored and take up religion

or go in for cats and dogs or indulge in other hobbies that offend no one but God.

The records of the population made by the *Bureau de Longitudes* authorize us to again subtract from the total mass two million beautiful little girls; they are still at the dawn of life and play with their friends without thinking that the boys who make them laugh may some day cause them to shed tears.

Now, of the two million remaining women, where is the man who will not grant that there are one hundred thousand poor, sickly, hunchbacked, ugly, blind, rickety and otherwise infirm girls, with no means, although possessing a good education, but all spinsters, and therefore unable to transgress the holy laws of matrimony?

Are we to be refused another hundred thousand girls who are Sainte-Camille sisters, sisters of charity, nuns, teachers, companions, etc.? We will also add to these holy pursuits the number, rather difficult to appraise, of young girls too old to play with little boys and too young to scatter their sprays of orange-blossoms.

Finally, from the fifteen hundred thousand subjects which remain in the bottom of the crucible, we will deduct another five hundred thousand units which we shall attribute to the daughters of Baal who delight coarse men. We shall even add to this number, without fear that they will contaminate each other, kept women, milliners, shop-girls, actresses, singers, chorus-girls, dancers, *servantes-mâîtresses*, maids, etc. Most of these creatures excite numerous passions, but deem it indecent to notify a mayor, a notary, a priest and a host of fun-makers of the day and hour on which they give themselves to their lovers. Their system, justly frowned upon by inquisitive society, has the advantage of exempting them from any obligation toward mankind, the mayor and justice. Now, as these women in no way break public vows, they have no place in a work dealing exclusively with legitimate marriage.

This is claiming very little for this class, some will say, but it will compensate for the ones which some amateurs might be inclined to think a trifle exaggerated. If any-

one, out of love for a wealthy dowager, would like to have her counted in the remaining million, he will have to take her out of the chapter of sisters of charity, dancers or hunchbacks. In short, we have decided to have only five hundred thousand women in this last category, because, as mentioned above, it often happens that the nine million peasants increase it by a great number of recruits. We have neglected the laboring class and the small trade for the same reason: the women who compose these two social divisions are the product of the efforts of the nine million female bimanies to elevate themselves to the high regions of civilization. Without this scrupulous precision, a great many persons might be inclined to look upon this statistical meditation as a joke.

We, it is true, thought of organizing a small class of one hundred thousand individuals, as a sinking fund for the species and refuge for those women who fall into a medium stage, like widows, for instance; but we preferred to count generously.

It is extremely easy to prove the exactitude of our analysis: a single reflection is sufficient.

A woman's life is divided into three distinct periods: the first one begins in the cradle and lasts until girlhood; the second comprises the time during which a woman belongs to marriage; the third starts at the turn of life, Nature's rather summary means of letting the passions know that they are required to cease. These periods being almost of the same duration, they naturally divide a given quantity of women into equal numbers. Thus, in a mass of six million women one finds, those fractions that scientists are welcome to seek excepted, about two million girls between one and eighteen years of age, two million women at least eighteen and at most forty years old, and two million old women. Thus the caprices of the social state have distributed the two million marriageable women into three great categories, namely: those who remain unwedded for the reasons we have set forth; those whose virtue is a matter of small concern to their husbands, and the million legitimate wives with whom this book is going to deal.

You will note, by this rather precise summing up of the female population, that, in France, there scarcely exists a little flock of a million spotless lambs, privileged fold into which the wolves are eager to enter.

Let us again sift this million already so carefully selected. In order to arrive at a better appreciation of the degree of confidence that a man should have in his wife, we shall suppose for a moment that all these women will be unfaithful to their husbands.

From this hypothesis, it will be well to retrench about a twentieth of young wives, who, having been only recently married, will be faithful to their vows at least a certain length of time. Another twentieth must be granted the sick ones. That is allowing but a small percentage for human ills.

Certain passions, which, it is claimed, destroy a man's power over women's hearts, ugliness, worry, pregnancy, are also entitled to a twentieth.

Adultery does not take possession of a woman's heart suddenly. Even should liking awaken other sentiments at first sight, there is always a struggle, the length of which forms a certain waste in the sum total of conjugal infidelities. It is almost an insult to modesty in France to represent the length of these struggles, in such a warlike nation, only by a twentieth of the female total; but then, we shall suppose that certain ill women keep their lovers e'en amid their calming potions, and that there are others whose pregnancy makes a few sly bachelors wink. Thus we will be able to save the modesty of those ladies who fight for virtue.

For the same reason, we do not dare to believe that a woman forsaken by her lover finds another one *hic et nunc*; but this waste being less great than the preceding one, we shall estimate it at a fortieth.

These deductions will reduce our sum total to eight hundred thousand women, when we endeavor to determine the number of those who will prove faithless to their marriage vow.

Now, who would not like to believe these women virtuous?

Are they not the flower of the land? Are they not all blooming, charming, bewildering with youth and beauty, bubbling over with life and love? To believe in their virtue is a sort of social religion, for they are the ornament of the world and the glory of France.

So it is in this million that we are to seek:

The number of nice women;

The number of virtuous women.

This investigation and these two categories demand entire Meditations which will serve as appendix to the present one.

MEDITATION III

ON THE NICE WOMAN

THE preceding Meditation has shown that we possess, in France, a floating mass of one million women who exploit the privilege of inspiring the passions which a gentleman acknowledges without shame or conceals with pleasure. So it is on this million that we shall direct our diogenical lantern to find the good women of the land. This search leads us to several digressions.

Two well-dressed young men, whose graceful bodies and rounded arms recall a woman's and whose shoes are of the best make, meet one morning on the boulevard at the Passage des Panoramas.

"*Tiens*, it's you!"

"Yes, *mon cher*, I look like myself, I hope?"

And they laugh more or less wittily, according to the nature of the opening of their conversation.

After they have taken each other in with the sly curiosity of a police officer who is trying to make an identification, and are convinced of the respective freshness of their gloves, waistcoats and ties; after they are sufficiently sure that neither of them has had any misfortune since they last met, they link arms and saunter forth and if they start from the Variétés they will not reach Frascati's without having asked

each other a rather broad question which, liberally translated, means:

“Who are you wedded to for the present?”

As a general thing, it is always some charming woman.

Who is the pedestrian in Paris in whose ears have not fallen, like bullets on a battlefield, thousands of words uttered by passers-by, and who has not caught on the fly one of those innumerable sentences referred to by Rabelais? Why, most men walk about Paris in the same way that they eat and drink—thoughtlessly. There are few skilled musicians and practiced physiognomists who can tell in what key those scattered notes are written, from what passion they proceed. Oh! to stroll about Paris! What an adorable and delightful existence! To stroll is a science, the gastronomy of the eye; to walk is to vegetate; to stroll is to live. A young and pretty woman who has been gazed upon long and ardently would be much more entitled to demand wages than the tavernkeeper who asked twenty sous of the Limousin whose nostrils, spread like sails, sniffed nourishing and fragrant odors from his ovens. To stroll means to enjoy, to gather shafts of wit, to admire sublime pictures of joy, love, and woe, graceful or grotesque portraits; it means to plunge one's glance into hundreds of lives; if one is young, it means to desire and to possess all; if old, to live the life of youths and to espouse their passions. Now, how many answers an artistic stroller has he not heard to the categorical question at which we paused?

“She is thirty-five, but she doesn't look twenty,” exclaims a youth who, just out of college, would, like Cherubin, gladly embrace the whole world.

“Why, my lady has batiste wrappers and diamond rings for the night,” says a young law clerk.

“She has a carriage and a box at the Français,” says a soldier.

“Well,” exclaims a slightly older man, who seems to be replying to an attack, “it doesn't cost me a sou! When a man is built on my lines—— Have you come to that, my respectable friend?”

And the questioner delivers a slight slap on the abdomen of his companion.

"Oh, she loves me," says still another passer-by, "you have no idea how much! But she has such a fool of a husband! Ah! Buffon has most wonderfully described animals, but the two-legged one called 'husband'——"

What a pleasant remark to overhear when one is married!

"Oh! my friend, like an angel!" is the answer to a whispered question.

"Can you tell me her name, or point her out to me?"

"Oh no, she is a *nice woman*."

When a student is loved by a coffee-house keeper, he speaks of her with pride and takes his friends there to dine. If a young man is in love with a woman whose husband keeps a shop, he will redden and reply: "She sells underwear, she is the wife of a stationer, a haberdasher, a dry-goods merchant, a clerk, etc."

But this acknowledgment of an inferior love, a love which has grown amongst bolts of cloth, cotton underwear and sugar loaves, is always accompanied by a pompous eulogy of the lady's wealth. Only the husband is interested in the business, he is rich, he has a fine house; anyhow, the beloved one visits her lover; she owns a cashmere shawl, a country house, etc.

In short, a young man never lacks excellent reasons to show that his mistress will very soon become a *nice woman*, if she is not one already. This distinction, which is due to the elegance of our customs, has become as hard to define as the subtle demarcation which indicates *bon ton*. What, then, is a *nice woman*?

This subject is so important to the vanity of women, to the vanity of their lovers and even their husbands, that we must give here some general rules resulting from long and careful observations.

Our million privileged heads represent a mass of women eligible to the glorious title of *nice women*, but all are not chosen. The principles of the choice are comprised in the following axioms:

Aphorisms

I

A nice woman is essentially a married one.

II

A nice woman is less than forty years old.

III

A married woman whose favors are purchasable is not a nice woman.

IV

A married woman who owns her carriage is a nice woman.

V

A married woman who does her own cooking is not a nice woman.

VI

When a man has an income of twenty thousand francs a year, his wife is a nice woman, no matter in what line of business he was engaged.

VII

Any woman who says *lettre d'échange* instead of *lettre de change*, *souyer* instead of *soulier*, *pierre de lierre* instead of *pierre de liais*; who says of a man: "Isn't Monsieur So-and-so *farce*?" can never be a nice woman, no matter how great her fortune may be.

VIII

A nice woman must have a financial position that will allow her lover to think that she will never in any way become a burden to him.

IX

A woman who lives on the third floor (excepting in the Rue de Rivoli and the Rue de Castiglione) is not a nice woman.

X

The wife of a banker is always a nice woman, but a woman who sits behind a counter cannot be nice, unless her husband has an extensive business and she does not reside over the shop.

XI

The unmarried niece of a bishop who resides with him may be considered nice, because, if she have an intrigue, she must necessarily deceive her uncle.

XII

A nice woman is a woman whom one is afraid to compromise.

XIII

An artist's wife is always considered nice.

By applying these principles, a man from the department of Ardèche can solve all the difficulties contained in this subject.

For a woman to be exempt from doing her own cooking, to have received a brilliant education, to have the sentiment of coquetry, to have the right to spend hours in her boudoir stretched on a divan, and to live the life of the soul, she requires at least an income of six thousand francs in the provinces and ten thousand francs in Paris. These two sums will permit us to know the presumable number of nice women who are to be found in the million, the rough product of our statistics.

Now, three hundred thousand men of leisure, having an income of fifteen thousand francs, represent the sum total of pensions and life interests paid by the Treasury, and that of the mortgage incomes.

Three hundred thousand real estate owners having three thousand five hundred francs a year represent the whole territorial wealth;

Two hundred thousand sharers at the rate of fifteen hun-

dred francs, represent the division of the State budget and the division of the municipal and departmental budgets; after subtracting the debt, the income of the clergy, the pay of the heroes who receive five sous a day, and the sums allotted to them for their wash, their food, their uniforms, etc.;

Two hundred thousand mercantile fortunes, at the rate of twenty thousand francs capital, represent all the possible commercial establishments of France;

So here are at least a million husbands.

But how many men having incomes ranging from ten to six hundred francs, recorded in the Great-Book and elsewhere, shall we find?

How many land-owners are there who do not pay more than five, twenty, one hundred, two hundred and two hundred and eighty francs taxes?

How many tax-payers are poor clerks who earn only six hundred francs a year?

How many business men, shall we say, who have only fictitious capitals; who, rich in credit, have not an available sou and are like unto sieves through which flow streams of gold? And how many merchants who have a capital of only one, two, four or five thousand francs?

Oh, industry, all hail to thee!

Let us make more happy ones than there are, perhaps, and divide this million into two parts: five hundred thousand couples will have from one hundred to three thousand francs a year, and five hundred thousand women will fulfill the conditions required in order to be considered nice.

According to the observations which conclude our statistical Meditation, we are authorized to deduct from this number one hundred thousand units: consequently, one can look upon it as a mathematically proven proposition, that there are only four hundred thousand women in France the possession of whom can procure to refined men those exquisite and distinguished delights which they crave in love.

Indeed, now is the time to let the adepts for whom we are writing, know that love is not solely composed of a few entreating interviews, a few nights of pleasure, a more or less intelligent caress and a spark of conceit dignified by

the name of jealousy. Our four hundred thousand women are not of a kind of which one could say: "*La plus belle fille du monde ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a.*"* No, they are richly endowed with all the treasures that our fond imaginations lend them, they know how to sell dearly that which they do not possess, in order to compensate for the vulgarity of what they give.

When you kiss the hand of a grisette do you experience any more pleasure than when you exhaust that fleeting voluptuousness that all women offer you?

Is it the conversation of a shopkeeper that will make you hope for infinite delights?

Between yourself and a woman socially inferior to you, the joys of self-conceit are known to her alone. You are not in the secret of the happiness you give.

Between yourself and a woman superior to you by social position or wealth, the tickling of vanity is great and shared. A man never was able to lift a woman to his heights; but a woman always gives her lover the same place she herself occupies. "I can make princes, and you will never make anything but bastards," is a reply full of truth.

If love is the first of all passions, it is because it flatters every one of them. We love in proportion to the number of chords that our fair mistress awakens in our hearts.

Biren, who was the son of a goldsmith, getting into the bed of the Duchesse de Courlande and helping her to sign the promise to proclaim him the sovereign of the land, as he was the lord of the young and beautiful ruler, is the prototype of the happiness which our four hundred thousand women must give their lovers.

In order to be able to walk over all the people that gather in a popular salon, one must be the lover of one of those wonderful women. Now, we are all more or less fond of trampling others underfoot.

And so it is at this brilliant portion of the nation that are leveled the attacks of all the men for whom education, talent or wit have acquired the right to count for something in that human fortune of which nations are so proud;

* The finest girl in the world can only give what she has.

and it is in this class of women only that you will find the one whose heart will be so jealously guarded by *our* husband.

What does it matter whether or not the considerations to which our feminine aristocracy gives rise can be applied to other social classes? That which will be true of these women who are so refined in their manners, speech, and thoughts; in whom a careful education has developed a taste for art, a faculty for feeling, comparing, reflecting; who have such a wonderful sentiment for politeness and propriety, and who are the arbiters of conventionality in France, must be applicable to women of all nations and of all kinds. The superior man to whom this book is dedicated, necessarily must possess a certain perspicacity of vision that will enable him to follow the gradations of light in each class and to determine the point of civilization where such and such an observation is still true.

Is it not, then, of the highest interest to morality to ascertain the number of virtuous women who are to be found among these adorable creatures? Is it not a marito-national question?

MEDITATION IV

ON THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

It is not so much the question to know how many virtuous women there are, as to find out whether a *nice* woman can remain virtuous.

In order to throw more light on this important point, let us rapidly review the masculine population.

From our fifteen million men we will first deduct the nine million creatures possessing thirty-two vertebræ, and only admit six million subjects in our physiological analysis. The Marceaus, Massénas, Rousseaus, Diderots and Rollins oftentimes spring suddenly from this fermenting social mass; but we shall be willfully inaccurate here. These miscalculations will make themselves strongly felt at the end and will

corroborate the terrible results which the mechanism of public passions is going to reveal to us.

From six million privileged men we shall deduct three million old men and children.

This subtraction, the reader will say, produced four million, when applied to the women.

At first sight, this difference may seem strange, but it is easily explained.

The average age at which women marry is twenty years, and after forty, they cease to be counted as factors in love.

Now, a boy of seventeen often encroaches mightily upon his neighbor's property, or, in other words, gives great slashes to the parchment of contracts, and especially to the old ones, as we are told by the chronicles of scandal.

Now, a man of fifty-two is more to be feared at that age than at any other. It is at this time of life that he puts into use an experience dearly acquired and all of the fortune that he is supposed to possess. The passions under which he labors being the last he will ever experience, he is as pitiless and strong as a man caught by the tide and swept away, who clutches at a slender willow branch, the first shoot of the year.

XIV

Physically, a man is longer a man, than a woman is a woman. As regards marriage, the difference in length between a man's and a woman's amorous life is of fifteen years. This time equals three-quarters of the time that a woman's deceptions can render her husband wretched. However, the remainder of the subtraction made on our mass of men only produces a difference of a sixth at the most, when compared to the one resulting from the subtraction practiced on the feminine population.

Our figures are extremely moderate. As for our reasons, they are so vulgarly obvious, that we have only produced them for greater accuracy and to forestall any criticism.

It has thus been proven to all philosophers who are ever so slightly inclined to be mathematical, that there exists in France a floating mass of three million men at least seven-

teen years old and at most fifty-two, all very much alive, with sound teeth and a great desire to bite and to walk in the road leading to Paradise.

The observations that have already been made allow us to deduct a million husbands from this mass. Let us suppose for a moment that, always satisfied and happy, like our model husband, these spouses are content to restrict themselves to conjugal love.

But our two million bachelors have no need of any income whatever in order to make love.

But it is sufficient for a man to be wide-awake and persistent to obliterate a husband in a wife's mind;

But it is not at all necessary that he should be good-looking or even well-set up;

But as long as a man has wit, a well-bred air and easy manners, women will never ask where he hails from, but only where he is bound for;

But the charm of youth is the only luggage that Love carries;

But a coat cut by Buisson, a pair of gloves purchased at Boivin's, elegant boots which the bootmaker is sorry he ever furnished, a gracefully knotted tie, are all-sufficient to assure a man's triumph in a salon;

But does not the army, although the craze for gold braid and lively colors has very much subsided, form a most formidable legion of bachelors? . . . Without mentioning Eginhard, as he was a private secretary, has not a newspaper recently reported that a German princess had bequeathed her fortune to a simple lieutenant of the Imperial Guards?

But the village notary from the depths of Gascogne sends his son to Paris to study law; the village haberdasher wants his boy to become a notary; the lawyer decides that his heir shall reach the Bench; the judge longs to be a minister of State, so that his children may be peers. Never, in the history of the world, has there been such a thirst for education. Nowadays, it is no longer wit that is as common as air, but talent. From all the cracks of our social state spring bright-hued flowers, just as they blossom forth in the spring from the cracks in old walls; even in cellars are sprays

of half-blown blossoms which, if the sun of education can be made to reach them, will in time assume brilliant colors. Ever since that great development of thought, that equal and fertile dispersion of light, we have hardly any superiority, because each man represents the total of instruction of his century. We are surrounded by living cyclopedias, that think, talk, walk, and would like to perpetuate themselves forever. This is the cause of those frightful ambitions and delirious passions: we want other worlds; we want hives ready to receive all these swarms, and we especially want a great many pretty women.

Again, the diseases which afflict a man produce no waste in the sum total of man's passions. Be it said to our shame, a woman is never more attached to us than when we are ill!

At this thought, all the epigrams directed against the weaker sex (it is very old-fashioned to say the fair sex) should cast aside their pointed arrows and become compliments! . . . All men ought to think that woman's only virtue is to love, that all women are wonderfully virtuous, and then and there they should close the book and the Meditation.

Ah! do you remember that dark and despairing hour, when, alone and ill and cursing your fellow-men, weak, discouraged and harboring thoughts of death, your head on a hot pillow and your body on a coarse sheet, you let your eyes wander feverishly over the green wall-paper of your deserted room? Do you remember, I say, seeing her open your door on a crack and advancing her lovely face framed by rolls of golden hair and a dainty bonnet? She appeared like a star in a stormy night to you and ran to you smiling and anxious!

"How did you do it? What did you tell your husband?" you inquire.

A husband! . . . Here we are again in the very midst of our subject.

XV

Morally, a man is oftener and longer a man than a woman is a woman.

However, we must consider that, among those two million

bachelors, there are a number of poor wretches in whom the sentiment of their misery, as well as unceasing labor, extinguishes all idea of love;

That they are not all college-bred and that there are many workingmen and lackeys (the Duc de Gèvres, who was very short and ugly, was walking one day in the park of Versailles and upon seeing some well-set-up valets exclaimed to his friends: "Look you, what sort of fellows we produce, and what they do for us! . . ."), many builders, many business men who think of nothing but trade;

That there are men who are uglier and more stupid than God would have made them;

That there are some whose characters are like milk and water;

That the clergy is generally chaste;

That there are men so placed that they can never enter into the brilliant sphere where nice women disport themselves, through a lack of clothes, bashfulness, or a proper introduction.

But we will leave to each one the care of swelling the number of exceptions according to his own experience (for the object of a book is, above all, to induce thought) and suppress at a blow half of the total mass and only admit that one million hearts are fit to offer their devotion to nice women: that is about the number of all our superiorities. Women do not, by any means, confine their love to intellectual men; but, once again, let us give virtue fair play.

Now, to hear our amiable bachelors, each one of them tells stories of a multitude of adventures that gravely compromise nice women. We are displaying great moderation when we allow each bachelor only three adventures; but if there be some who count far more liberally, there are others, and a great many, who, owing to the fact that they limited themselves to two or three passions, or even one, induced us, the same as for the statistics, to adopt individual apportionment. Now, if one multiplies the number of bachelors by the number of adventures, one obtains three million intrigues; and to meet them we only have four hundred thousand nice women! . . .

If the God of kindness and indulgence who rules the universe, has not caused another flood to purify humanity, it is no doubt because the first one was so unsuccessful. . . .

So this is a nation! This is a select society, and this is what the results are!

XVI

Customs are the hypocrisy of nations; the hypocrisy is more or less perfect.

XVII

Perhaps virtue is nothing but the courtesy of the soul.

Physical love is a want similar to hunger, with the only difference that a man eats all the time and that, in love, his appetite is neither as constant nor as regular as it is in regard to food.

A loaf of coarse bread and a jug of water can conquer the hunger of any man; but our civilization has invented gastronomy.

Love has its loaf of bread, but it also possesses that art which we call *coquetterie*, a charming word which only exists in France, the birthplace of this science.

Now, is it not enough to make all husbands tremble when they stop to think that man is so possessed by the innate desire for change, that, no matter in what wild country travelers have landed, they have found *ragôuts* and alcoholic beverages?

But hunger is not as violent as love; the caprices of the soul are far more numerous, irritating and sought after than the caprices of gastronomy; all that poets and events have revealed to us of human love, has armed our bachelors with a terrible power: they are the lions of the Gospel in search of helpless preys.

At this very point, let every man examine his conscience, summon his reminiscences and ask himself whether he has ever met a man who has limited himself to the love of one woman!

How, alas, can we explain, to the honor of all nations, the problem resulting from three million burning passions

with nothing but four hundred thousand women to feed upon? . . . Shall we allow four bachelors to each woman and admit that nice women have perhaps established, without knowing it, a sort of exchange between themselves and the bachelors, similar to the rotation invented by the presidents of royal courts in order that their councilors might pass successively through every chamber within a certain number of years?

A most mournful way to enlighten the difficulty!

Shall we go as far as to conjecture that certain nice women act, in the distribution of bachelors, like the lion of the fable? . . . What! at least half of our altars might be nothing but whited sepulchers! . . .

For the honor of French ladies, shall we suppose that, in times of peace, other countries import a certain quantity of their nice women, principally England, Germany and Russia? . . . But the European nations will try to establish a balance by objecting that France also exports a certain number of pretty women.

Morality and religion suffer so much through these calculations, that a gentleman, in his desire to exonerate married women, would be glad to believe that dowagers and young girls are at least responsible for half of the general corruption, or better still, that bachelors prevaricate.

But what are we computing? Think of our husbands who, be it said to their everlasting disgrace, almost all act as if they were bachelors and glorify themselves, *in petto*, regarding their adventures.

Oh! then we believe that every husband who is the least bit ticklish regarding his honor, as old Corneille would say, should get a rope and a nail: *fœnum habet in cornu*.

Yet, it is amongst these four hundred thousand nice women that, lantern in hand, we must look for the number of virtuous women in France! . . . In reality, by our conjugal statistics, we only retrenched creatures in which society has not the slightest interest. Is it not true that, in France, nice people, *les gens comme il faut*, hardly form a total of three million individuals, namely: our one million bachelors, five hundred thousand nice women, five hundred thousand husbands, and a million dowagers, children and young girls?

Are you still surprised at the celebrated line of Boileau? That line shows that the poet had skillfully studied the remarks mathematically set forth in these sad Meditations, and that it is not a hyperbole.

However, there are virtuous women:

Yes, those who have never been tempted and those who have died in child-birth, supposing always that they were virgins when they married;

Yes, those who are as ugly as Kaifakatadary in the *Arabian Nights*;

Yes, those whom Mirabeau calls the *fées concombres*, and who are composed of exactly the same atoms that make up the roots of strawberry-plants and pond-lilies; however, it would perhaps be well not to trust them too much! . . .

Then let us admit to the credit of the century that, since the restoration of religion and morality, and as times go, one can meet here and there women who are so moral, so religious and so deeply attached to their duty, so strict, so cold, so virtuous, so . . . that the Devil does not dare even to glance at them; they are flanked by rosaries, prayer-books and religious advisers. . . . Sh! sh! . . .

We shall not attempt to count the women who are virtuous from stupidity, for it is well-known that in love matters all women are wise.

Finally, it might not be impossible that, in some unknown parts, exist young, pretty and virtuous women of whom the world knows nothing.

But do not call virtuous the woman who, struggling against an involuntary passion, has not granted anything to the lover whom she regrets to adore with all her soul. It is the greatest insult that can be offered a husband who is in love with his wife. What remains for him? A thing nameless, a body without a soul. In the midst of pleasure, his mate acts like the guest warned by Borgia in the midst of a feast, that certain dishes are poisoned: he loses his appetite, scarcely touches the viands or makes a pretense of eating. He regrets the feast he has left in order to be the guest of the terrible cardinal and sighs for the time when, at the close of the meal, he will be allowed to leave the board.

What is the result of these remarks on feminine virtue? This: but the two last maxims were given us by an eclectic philosopher of the eighteenth century:

XVIII

A virtuous woman possesses one heartstring more or one less than her sisters: she is either foolish or sublime.

XIX

Virtue in women is perhaps a question of temperament.

XX

The most virtuous women have within them something that is never chaste.

XXI

“That an intelligent man should have doubts regarding his mistress’ conduct is natural enough, but that he should doubt his wife! . . . really, he must be a very foolish man.”

XXII

“Men would be too unhappy if, when with women, they remembered what they know by heart.”

The number of rare women who, like the wise virgins, have known enough to keep their lamps lighted, will always be too small in the eyes of the champions of virtue and righteousness; yet it must be taken off the sum total of nice women, and that comforting subtraction renders the husbands’ danger still greater, the scandal larger and besmirches all the more the remainder of legitimate wives.

Who is the husband who can now sleep quietly beside his young and pretty consort, after learning that at least three bachelors are on the lookout to rob him; that, if they have not already encroached upon his property, they regard his bride as their legitimate prey, who, sooner or later, will fall victim to them, whether by force, by ruse, or by her own free will, and that it is impossible that, some day, they will not be victorious!

Frightful conclusion! . . .

Here the moral purists, the *collets montés*, in a word, will perhaps accuse us of having given too discouraging figures: they will want to defend either the nice women or the bachelors; but we have reserved one last observation for their benefit.

Increase at will the number of nice women and decrease the number of bachelors, you will nevertheless always find in the end more intrigues than there are nice women; you will always find an enormous amount of bachelors compelled, through our customs, to commit three varieties of crimes.

If they remain chaste, their health will suffer cruelly; they will thwart the sublime designs of Nature and finish their days as consumptives in some Swiss mountain-resort, drinking milk.

If they give way to their legitimate temptations, they will either compromise nice women, and thus we get back to the subject of our book, or else they will degrade themselves by intercourse with the five hundred thousand women whom we mentioned in the last category of the first Meditation, and in this case, they have a fine chance to drink milk again and to end their days in Switzerland! . . .

Have you never been struck, as we have, by the faulty organization of our social body, which remark is going to serve as moral proof of our last figures?

The average age at which a man marries is thirty years; the average age at which his passions, his desire for sexual enjoyment are strongest, is twenty. Now, during the ten best years of his life, during the heyday when his looks, his youth and his intellect render him more dangerous than at any other period of his life to husbands, he stays without being able to *legally* satisfy the longing for love that upsets his entire being. As this lapse of time represents the sixth part of the duration of human life, we must admit that at least the sixth part of our total of men, and the most vigorous part, remains constantly in an attitude as tiring to them as it is dangerous to society.

"Why don't their parents see that they get married?" some pious sister will cry.

But where is the father with any common-sense who would allow his son to marry at twenty?

Are not the pitfalls of these precocious unions sufficiently known? It would seem that marriage were an institution most contrary to the natural instincts, since it requires a particular maturity of intellect. In short, everyone knows that Rousseau has said: "There must always be a period of wildness in either state. It is a bad leaven, which, sooner or later, will ferment."

Now, where is the mother who would risk the happiness of her daughter by giving her to a man in whom this fermentation has not taken place?

Besides, why is it necessary to justify a fact under the power of which all societies labor? Is there not in every country an enormous percentage of men who live upright lives outside of marriage and bachelorhood?

"Cannot these men remain continent, like the priests?" our pious sister will ask.

Certainly, madame.

However, we will ask our reader to note that the vow of chastity is one of the greatest exceptions of the natural order of things, required by society; that continence is the one great point in the profession of the priest; that he must be chaste in the same way that a doctor must be insensible to physical suffering, that a notary and a lawyer are insensible to the misery which they come in contact with, that soldiers are insensible to the proximity of death on a battlefield. But, from the fact that the needs of civilization petrify certain fibers of the heart and cause callous spots on certain membranes whose function is to reason, one should not conclude that all men are compelled to undergo that partial and exceptional death of the soul. That would be leading humanity toward a despicable moral suicide.

But, let a young man of eight-and-twenty be introduced into the most rigorous salon that it would be possible to find, a young man who has kept his garment of innocence as unsoiled as the woodcocks that are the delight of *gourmets*, and cannot you see the strictest woman of the gathering making him some bitter compliment on his courage, the

severest judge that ever ascended the bench shaking his head and all the women hiding their faces so that he will not hear their laughter? What a flood of jests is poured on the innocent head of the heroic and undiscoverable victim, when he leaves the room! . . . How many insults! For what is more shameful, in France, than coldness, impotency, the absence of all passion, and bashfulness?

The only king of France who would not die of laughter might be Louis XIII.; but, as regards his gallant father, he might perhaps have banished such a youngster, either for not being a Frenchman or for setting a dangerous example.

Strange contradiction! A young man is just as much blamed for spending his life *en terre sainte*, to use a current expression among bachelors. Is it perhaps for the benefit of nice women that the prefects of police and the mayors have, since time immemorial, ordered all public passions to begin only at nightfall and to cease at eleven o'clock?

Where do you expect our mass of bachelors to sow their wild oats? And who is being fooled, as Figaro wants to know? The rulers or the ruled? Is society like the small boy who stops his ears at the theater, so as not to hear the report of a gun? Is it afraid of probing the wound? Or has it been recognized that the disease is one that cannot be cured, and that it is better to let the matter rest? But this is a question of legislation, for it is impossible to escape from the social and material dilemma which results from this balance-sheet of virtue as regards marriage. It is not for us to solve this difficulty; however, let us suppose for a moment that, in order to protect so many families, so many nice girls, so many women, society was compelled to give the right to satisfy the bachelors to hearts patented for the purpose: then should not our laws consider these female Deciuses who give themselves for the good of the republic and form a wall of their bodies around families? Legislators are greatly to blame for having neglected to regulate the fate of the courtesan.

XXIII

The courtesan is an institution if she is a need.

This question is so full of *ifs* and *buts* that we bequeath it to our nephews; we must give them something to do. Besides, it is quite accidental in this work; for, to-day more than at any previous time, sensibility has developed; never before has morality been so widespread, because never before was it realized that pleasure comes from the heart. Now, where is the man with sentiment, the bachelor, who, in the presence of four hundred thousand young and pretty women endowed with wealth and well-cultivated minds, rich with the treasures of coquetry and lavish of happiness, would want to go? . . . For shame!

XXIV

In the social order, unavoidable abuses are laws of nature, in accordance with which man must formulate his civil and political laws.

XXV

"Adultery," says Chamfort, "is like bankruptcy, with this difference, that the one to whom it is done suffers dishonor."

In France, the laws relative to adultery and bankruptcy are in great need of being modified. Are they too lenient? Are their principles faulty? *Caveant consules!*

Well, brave athlete, you who have taken to your credit the little apostrophe that our first Meditation addresses to those burdened with a wife, what do you say to this? Let us hope that the cursory glance thrown on the question does not make you tremble, that you are not one of those men whose spinal column burns and whose nerves freeze at the sight of an abyss or a boa constrictor!

Ah! my friend, the man who possesses must fight. The men who covet your money are far more numerous even than those who covet your wife.

After all, every husband is free to consider these trifles figures, or these figures trifles. The finest things in life are the illusions of life. The most respectable things in life are our most futile beliefs. Aren't there a number of people whose principles are nothing but prejudices, and who, not having sufficient strength to formulate virtue and happiness alone, accept ready-made articles from the hands of the lawmakers? Therefore, we address ourselves only to those *Manfreds* who, having lifted too many garments, want to lift all the veils in the moments when they are tormented by their moral spleen. For them the question has now been boldly put, and we know the extent of the evil.

There remains for us to look into the general chances which may be encountered in each marriage and which render the man weaker in the struggle from which our champion is to issue victorious.

MEDITATION V

CONCERNING THE PREDESTINATED ONES

PREDESTINATED means destined in advance for happiness or misfortune. Theology has taken possession of the word and always makes use of it to designate the blessed; we shall give to this term a meaning fatal to our chosen ones, of whom one might say, contrary to the ones in the Gospel: "Many are called and many are chosen."

Experience has shown that there are certain classes of men more subject than others to certain misfortunes. Just as apoplexy attacks people with short necks, and *anthrax* (a kind of plague) chooses its victims principally among butchers, while gout afflicts the rich, health the poor, deafness the kings, paralysis the administrators, it has been observed that certain classes of husbands are more particularly victims of illegitimate passions. Those husbands and their wives monopolize the attention of bachelors. It is a different kind of aristocracy. If any of my readers should find himself in one of these aristocratic classes, he will, we

hope, display enough presence of mind, he or his wife, to instantly remember the favorite axiom of the Latin grammar by Lhommond: "No rule without its exception." A friend of the family might even quote the following line:

*La personne présente est toujours exceptée.**

And then each one of them will have, *in petto*, the right to consider himself an exception. But our duty, as well as the interest which we feel for husbands and the desire we have to preserve so many young and pretty women from the caprices and misfortunes that follow in the wake of a lover, compel us to point out in the proper order the husbands who must be more especially on their guard.

In this census, will first appear the husbands whose business, positions or functions call them away from home at certain hours and during a certain time. These men shall carry the banner of the fraternity.

Among them we will mention the removable as well as unremovable magistrates, who are forced to spend a great part of the day at the Palais; the other officials sometimes find a way of leaving their offices; but a judge or an attorney for the Crown, who sits on *fleur de lis*, must, so to speak, die in harness. That is his battlefield.

It is the same with the deputies and peers who discuss the laws, with the ministers who work with the king, with the directors who work with the ministers, with the soldiers on duty, and with the patrolling corporal, as is shown by the letter of Lafleur, in the *Voyage Sentimental*.

After these people, who are obliged to leave home at appointed hours, come the men whom great and serious occupations absorb so completely that they have no time to be agreeable; their brows are always clouded, and their conversation is rarely cheerful.

At the head of these horny battalions, we shall place the bankers who toil to amass millions, and whose heads are so crammed with figures that the latter end by piercing their occiputs and erecting themselves in columns above their brows.

* Present company is always excepted.

These millionaires, who, most of the time, forget the holy laws of matrimony and the care they should bestow upon the tender flower that has been intrusted to them, never think of watering it and protecting it from heat and cold. They are hardly aware that the happiness of a wife has been intrusted to them: if they do remember it, it is at dinner, when they see a richly-gowned woman sitting opposite to them, or when the fair lady, as graceful as Venus herself, asks them for an additional allowance. . . . Oh! then, in the evening, they sometimes remember the rights specified in Article 213 of the Civil Code and their wives recognize them; but, like those heavy duties that the laws put on foreign goods, they suffer them and acquit themselves in view of this axiom: "There is no pleasure without pain."

Scientists who remain whole months studying the bone of some antediluvian animal, figuring out the laws of Nature or trying to surprise her secrets; Greeks and Latins who dine off a thought of Tacitus, sup off a sentence of Thucydides, and live solely to wipe the dust off libraries and spend their time poring over a note or a papyrus, are all predestinated men. They are perfectly unconscious of their surroundings, so absorbed are they in their ecstasy; their misfortune might happen before their very eyes and they would hardly notice it? Happy men! a thousand times happy! Example: Beauzée who, returning from a séance at the Académie, surprises his wife with a German. "Did I not tell you, madame, that it is time I went," exclaimed the foreigner. "Eh! my dear sir, at least say: 'That it *was!*'" corrected the academician.

Then, lyre in hand, come some poets whose whole animal forces forsake the *entresol* to take up their residence above. They are better adapted to ride Pegasus than the "mare of compère Pierre," * and rarely take unto themselves a wife, for they are accustomed to vent their ardor at intervals upon stray or imaginary Chlorises.

But the men whose noses are filthy with tobacco;

But those who were unfortunately born with an eternal cold;

* *La Jument du compère* (La Fontaine's *Contes et Nouvelles*).

But the sailors who smoke or chew ;

But the people whose bilious temperaments make them look as if they were always eating a sour apple ;

But the men who, in private life, have some cynical habit, some ridiculous practice, and who, in spite of everything, always have a slouchy look ;

But the husbands who earn the shameful name of *chauffe-là-couche* ;

Finally, the old men who wed young girls ;

All these people are pre-eminently predestinated !

There is a last class of men whose misfortune is almost certain. We mean those anxious and bustling, fussy and tyrannical individuals who have strange ideas on domestic domination, think openly ill of women and know no more of life than a grasshopper knows of natural history. When these men get married, their households look like the wasps that a schoolboy has deprived of their heads and that grope their way over a window-pane. For this class, this book will be absolutely unintelligible. Nor are we writing for those fools who look like the carved statues of a cathedral, any more than we are writing for those old machines at Marly that cannot supply water to the arbors of Versailles without being threatened with sudden dissolution.

I rarely witness in society the marital singularities that abound there, without thinking of a sight I enjoyed in my youth.

In 1819, I was living in a cottage in the delightful valley of l'Isle-Adam. My hermitage was close to the park of Cassan, a most delightful retreat and one which offered greater charms to the idler than all those created by art. That green *chartreuse* is due to an old-fashioned farmer-general, by the name of Bergeret, famous for his originality, and who, among other eccentric things, used to go to the Opera with gold-powdered hair, have his park illuminated for his sole enjoyment and was in the habit of giving banquets to himself. That extravagant man had returned from Italy so enamoured of its beautiful scenery, that, through an attack of fanaticism, he spent four or five millions to have

the views he had brought back with him copied by landscape gardeners. The most charming contrasts of vegetation, the rarest trees, long valleys, picturesque viewpoints, islands floating on crystal waters, are like so many rays carrying their treasures to a central point, an *isola bella*, an island on which is a little house hidden by ancient willow-trees, an island bordered with rushes, gladiolas and other flowers and which is like an emerald richly set. It is a place to shun! . . . The most sickly, boorish and dry of our men of genius would die there within two weeks, overwhelmed by the savory richness of a vegetative existence. The rather indifferent owner of that Eden was devoted to a large simian, for want of a wife and children. Once the lover of an empress, perhaps he had tired of the human tribe. A pretty wooden lantern supported by a carved pedestal was the abode of the sly beast, which, chained and neglected by its master, who was oftener in Paris than at his country-seat, had acquired a very bad reputation. I remember having seen it, in the presence of ladies, act almost as insolently as a man. His increasing savagery finally compelled his master to have him killed. One morning, when I was sitting under a blooming tulip-tree, perfectly idle, but drinking in the delightful perfume of the flowers, enjoying the silence of the woods, listening to the whispering water and the rustling leaves, admiring the pearly clouds above my head and perhaps dreaming of my future, I heard I know not what idiot, who had arrived from Paris the day before, begin to play the violin with the frenzy of a man who has nothing to do. I would not want my bitterest enemy to experience a shock so incongruous with the sublime harmony of Nature. Perhaps, if the distant echoes of Roland's hunting-horn had broken upon the stillness . . . but a shrill string which has the pretension of transmitting human thoughts and phrases! The fiddler, who was walking up and down in the dining-room, finally sat down by the window exactly opposite the monkey. Perhaps he was looking for an audience. Suddenly I saw the beast, which had left its little dungeon noiselessly, stand erect on its hind legs, bend its head and cross its arms like Spartacus bound or Catiline

listening to Cicero. The banker, called within by a sweet voice whose tones awakened the recollection of a boudoir known to me, flew away like a bird to join his mate. The great monkey whose chain was very long, climbed on the window-sill and solemnly grasped the violin. I do not know whether you have ever had the pleasure of watching a baboon trying to learn music, but even to-day, although my laughter is not as ready as in those care-free times, I never can think of that monkey without smiling. The semi-man began by clutching the instrument and sniffing it as if it had been an apple. His nasal aspirations probably made the sonorous wood give forth some sound, for then the orang-outang shook his head and began to turn the instrument about in every direction, holding it up to his ear and handling it with the wonderful agility that distinguishes these animals. He seemed to question the violin with an aimless sagacity, which was wonderful and incomplete at the same time. Finally, with the most grotesque gestures, he tried to place it under his chin, but, like a spoiled child, he soon wearied of a study that required so much skill, and touched the strings without being able to obtain anything but discords. He grew angry, and laid the instrument on the window-sill; then, snatching the bow, he began to scrape it violently up and down the strings, like a mason sawing a stone. This new attempt having failed to produce any better results, he took the bow in both hands and brought it down with all his might on the innocent and pleasure-giving instrument. I thought it was like a schoolboy giving a beating to a playmate in punishment of some cowardly act. After the violin had been judged and condemned, the simian sat down on the wreck and proceeded with silly delight to mix the strings of the bow.

Since that day I have never been able to watch the actions of predestinated husbands without comparing most of them to that monkey who wanted to play the violin.

Love is the most melodious of all harmonies and we are born with its sentiment. Woman is a delightful instrument of pleasure, but one must know all its strings, study its tone and ever-changing fingering. How many oranges . . .

I mean, men, marry without knowing what a woman is! How many predestinated ones have proceeded like the monkey of Cassan with its fiddle! They broke the heart which they could not comprehend, as they ruined and disdained the jewel whose secret they ignored. Children all their lives, they die empty-handed, having vegetated, prattled of love and pleasure, of vice and virtue, like slaves speak of liberty. Almost all of them married in the greatest ignorance of woman and love. They began by breaking into a strange house and expected to be welcomed. But the poorest artist knows that between himself and his instrument (whether it be of wood or ivory), there exists a sort of undefinable friendship. He knows by experience that it took years to establish that mysterious tie between the inanimate matter and himself. He was not able all at once to guess its resources and caprices, its qualities and faults. Only after a long study does the instrument become like a soul to him and yield its sweetest sounds. They are never close friends until after the most searching questions.

Is it by remaining doubled up in his cell like a seminarist that a man can learn to know woman and read that admirable music? Is a man whose business it is to think for other men, to judge them, to govern them, to steal from them, to feed them, to cure them, to injure them, capable of doing it? Can all our predestinated ones spend their time studying a woman? They sell their time, so how could they give it to the quest of happiness? Money is their god. One cannot serve two masters at the same time. Therefore, the world is full of young wives who drag out an unhappy existence, pale and sickly. Some are the victims of more or less serious inflammations, others are a prey to more or less violent nervous derangements. The husbands of all those women are fools and predestinated men. They have brought about their own wretchedness with the same care that a wise husband would have given to the cultivation of pleasure's tardy and delightful flowers. The time that an ignoramus spends in bringing about his own ruin is precisely that which a wise man uses to increase his happiness and welfare.

XXVI

Never begin marriage by a rape.

In the preceding Meditations, we indicated the extent of the evil with the disrespectful audacity with which surgeons boldly raise the tissues under which a shameful wound is hidden. Public virtue, put on our operating table, has not even left a corpse. Husband or lover, no doubt you smiled or trembled at the tale? Well, it is with malicious delight that we put the burden of that great evil on the shoulders of the "predestinated." Harlequin, wishing to find out whether his horse can get accustomed to going without food, is no more ludicrous than the men who want to find happiness in marriage without giving themselves the trouble of cultivating it with all the care it requires. A wife's misdeeds are so many accusations against the egotism, carelessness and nullity of her husband.

Now, it will be for you, reader, who so many times have criticised your own crime in your fellow-men, to hold the scales. One of the plates is already sufficiently weighted; let's see what you will put into the other one! Estimate the number of predestinated men that can be found in the sum total of married people, and then weigh; you will then know where the evil lies.

Let us endeavor to probe further into the causes of this conjugal disease.

The word *love* applied to the reproduction of the species, is the most odious blasphemy that modern customs have learned to utter. Nature, in elevating us above the beast through the divine gift of thought, rendered us capable of experiencing sentiments and sensations, needs and passions. This dual nature creates in man the beast and the lover. This distinction will shed light on the problem which engrosses our attention.

Marriage can be considered civilly, politically, and morally as an institution, a law, a contract; an institution, it is a guaranty, the obligations of which interest all men; they have a father and mother and will have children; a law, it is

the reproduction of the species; a contract, it is the transmission of property. Therefore, marriage should be the object of universal respect. Society could consider nothing outside of these chief points, which, in its estimation, entirely outweigh the conjugal question.

Most men, when they marry, have only in view reproduction, children or property; but neither reproduction, property or children constitute happiness. *Crescite et multiplicamini* does not involve love. To ask a young girl whom one has met once every day for two weeks to love in the name of law, king or justice, is an absurdity worthy of most predestinated men!

Love is a combination of desire and sentiment, and happiness in marriage results from a perfect understanding between the two consorts. It follows that, in order to be happy, a man is compelled to conform to certain laws of honor and delicacy. After having taken advantage of the social law that sanctions the desire, he must obey the laws of Nature which give birth to sentiment. If he exerts all his faculties in an endeavor to be loved, he is certainly animated by true passion and nothing can resist the latter.

But to be passionate always, means to desire always. Can a man constantly desire his wife?

Yes.

It is as absurd to contend that it is impossible to love always the same woman as it would be to assert that a celebrated artist needs several violins in order to execute a piece and to create an entrancing melody.

Love is the poetry of the senses. Its fate is similar to the fate of all that is great in man and of all that proceeds from his mind. Either it is, or it is not, sublime. When it once exists, it exists forever and daily increases in strength. This is the love that the ancients considered the son of Heaven and of Earth.

Literature revolves around seven situations; music expresses everything with seven notes; painting has only seven colors; like these three arts, love perhaps comprises seven principles; we shall leave their pursuit to the next century.

If poetry, music and painting have infinite expressions,

the pleasures of love must offer a great many more; for, in those three arts which help us to seek, perhaps vainly, the truth by analogy, a man is alone with his imagination, while love is the reunion of two bodies and two souls. If the three principal modes which serve to express thought require preliminary studies in those whom Nature has created poets, musicians and painters, does it not stand to reason then, that it is necessary to initiate oneself in the pleasures of love, in order to be happy? All men feel the need of reproduction, the same as they experience hunger and thirst; but not all have the vocation to be lovers or gastronomers. Our present civilization has proved that taste is a science, and that the art of eating is only given to a chosen few. Pleasure, considered in the light of an art, awaits its physiologist. It is sufficient for us to have shown that only the ignorance of the constitutive principles of happiness produces the misfortune that awaits all predestinated husbands.

It is only with the greatest timidity that we dare publish a few aphorisms that may give birth to this new art, like plaster created geology: and we hand them over to the meditations of philosophers, eligible young men and predestinated husbands.

Conjugal Catechism

XXVII

Marriage is a science.

XXVIII

A man cannot get married without having studied anatomy and dissected at least one woman.

XXIX

The fate of a married couple depends on the first night.

XXX

The woman deprived of her own free will can never have the merit of making a sacrifice.

XXXI

In love, regardless of the soul, a woman is like a lyre that only yields its secrets to him who is a skillful player.

XXXII

Regardless of a repulsive movement, there exists in the souls of all women a sentiment that tends to sooner or later proscribe the pleasures devoid of passion.

XXXIII

A husband's interest, as well as his honor, demands that he never permit himself a pleasure that he has not first had the talent to make desirable.

XXXIV

As pleasure is the combination of sensations and sentiment, one can boldly affirm that the delights of love are materialized ideas.

XXXV

As ideas are susceptible of infinite combinations, so should pleasures be infinitely varied.

XXXVI

In a man's life, no two moments of pleasure are alike, any more than there are two exactly similar leaves on the same tree.

XXXVII

If there is a difference between one moment of pleasure and another, a man can always be happy with the same woman.

XXXVIII

To skillfully note the shades of a pleasure, to develop them, to give them a new turn, constitutes the genius of a husband.

XXXIX

Between two people who are not in love, this genius becomes licentiousness; but the caresses over which Love presides are never lascivious.

XL

The chastest married woman can also be the most voluptuous one.

XLI

The most virtuous woman can be indecent without being aware of it.

XLII

When two people are united by pleasure, all social conventions are non-existent. This is a rock on which a number of ships have been wrecked. A husband is lost if he once forgets that there is a modesty quite independent of garments. Conjugal love should never unpropitiously remove or put on the bandage that covers its eyes.

XLIII

Power does not consist in striking hard or often, but in striking *à propos*.

XLIV

To create a desire, to nourish it, to develop it, to increase it, to irritate it, to satisfy it, is an entire poem.

XLV

The order of pleasure is from the distich to the quatrain, from the quatrain to the sonnet, from the sonnet to the ballad, from the ballad to the ode, from the ode to the cantata, from the cantata to the dithyramb. The husband who begins by the dithyramb is a fool.

XLVI

Each night should have its *menu*.

XLVII

Marriage must constantly combat a devouring monster: habit.

XLVIII

If a man is unable to distinguish between the pleasures of two consecutive nights, he has wedded too early.

XLIX

It is easier to be a lover than a husband, for the reason that it is harder to be clever every day, than to say bright things now and then.

L

A husband should never be the first to go to sleep nor the last to awaken.

LI

The man who enters his wife's dressing-room, is either a philosopher or a fool.

LII

The husband who leaves nothing to be desired is a lost man.

LIII

The married woman is a slave whom one should be wise enough to place on a throne.

LIV

A man cannot flatter himself that he knows his wife and makes her happy, unless he sees her often on her knees before him.

It was to the legions of predestinated husbands, smokers, chewers, grouches, old and catarrhal men that Sterne addressed the letter written in *Tristram Shandy* by Gauthier Shandy to his brother Toby, when the latter was about to wed the widow of Wadman.

As the famous advice which the most original of English

writers consigned in this letter can, with a few exceptions, be used to complete our remarks on the manner of treating women, we shall offer it textually to predestinated husbands, requesting them to meditate upon it as upon one of the most substantial masterpieces of human thought.

Letter of Mr. Shandy to Captain Toby Shandy.

“DEAR BROTHER TOBY:—What I am going to tell you concerns the nature of women and the manner of making love to them. And perhaps it is well for you (although it is not as well for me) that the opportunity has arisen and that I am capable of writing you a few instructions on the subject.

“If it had been the will of Him who makes our laws, to endow you with more knowledge than fell to my lot, I would have been delighted to have you take my place and wield my pen; but, as it behooves me to advise you, and as Mrs. Shandy is close at hand, preparing to retire for the night, I will jot down without order some ideas and maxims concerning marriage, as they come into my mind and as I think they will be of use to you, wishing thereby to give you a token of my friendship and having no doubt, my dear Toby, that you will receive it with gratitude.

“In the first place, as regards religion in this matter (although the blush of shame that rises to my cheek makes me aware that I crimson in speaking to you on this subject; although I know, in spite of your modesty, which would have us ignore it, that you neglect none of these pious duties), still, there is one which I should like to recommend to you especially, so that you will not forget it, at least during the time of your courtship. This pious practice consists in never going to see your lady love, be it morning or night, without first putting yourself in the care of the Almighty Lord, so that He will keep you from harm.

“You must shave your head and wash it every four or five days, and even oftener, if possible, for fear that, should you remove your wig in a moment of absent-mindedness, she might see how many of your hairs have fallen under the hand of Time and how many under Trim’s.

"You should, as much as possible, remove from her imagination any idea of baldness.

"Impress well on your mind, Toby, and follow this sure maxim: *All women are timid.*

"And it is lucky that they are; otherwise, who would want anything to do with them?

"Let your breeches be neither too tight nor too wide nor let them bear any resemblance to those large ones that our ancestors wore.

"A happy medium prevents any comments.

"Whatever you have to say, be it much or little, say it in a moderate voice. Silence and all that is like unto it, stamps in one's mind the mysteries of the night. That is why you must have a care never to drop the shovel or the tongs.

"In your conversations with her, carefully avoid all jests and raillery; and prevent her as much as possible from reading jovial books. There are some works on religion that you may permit her to read, although I should prefer her doing without them; but never allow her to read Rabelais, Scarron or *Don Quixote*.

"All these works are producers of mirth; and you know, Toby, that nothing is more serious than the ends of marriage.

"Always stick a pin in your frill before calling on her.

"If she allows you to sit on the same sofa with her and gives you the opportunity of laying your hand on hers, resist the temptation. You could not hold her hand without having the temperature of your palm betray the state of your feelings. Always leave her in doubt regarding these things, as well as many others. If you act in this manner, you will at least arouse her curiosity; and if she is not entirely enslaved and your *donkey* continues to be unruly (which is most probable), you had better have a few ounces of blood drawn from below your ears, as was the custom of the ancient Scythians who cured the wildest of their sensual appetites in this manner.

"Avicenne then recommends to rub oneself with extract of hellebore, after the proper evacuations and purgatives,

and I am inclined to approve his treatment. But be especially careful not to eat a great deal and to avoid goat meat and deer; abstain carefully, that is, as much as possible, from peacocks, cranes, coots, divers and moor-hens.

"As to your beverages, I need not tell you that you must confine yourself to a decoction of verbenas and other herbs, the beneficial effect of which was reported by Elien.

But should it affect your stomach, you would have to discontinue its use and live off cucumbers, melons, purslain and lettuce.

"I cannot at present think of anything else to say to you.

"Unless war should be declared. . .

"So, my dear Toby, I trust that all will go well with you.

"And I remain your affectionate brother,

"GAUTHIER SHANDY."

Under the present circumstances, Sterne himself would omit in his letter the reference to the *donkey*; and far from advising a predestinated husband to have any blood drawn, he would change the diet of cucumbers and lettuce to a much more substantial régime. At that time, he recommended economy in order to arrive at a magical profusion in time of war, thus imitating the wonderful English Government which, in times of peace, has two hundred warships, but whose navy-yards can, if need be, furnish the double when it is a question of spanning the ocean and capturing an entire fleet.

When a man belongs to the small number of those whom a good education has enabled to think, he should always, before entering upon matrimony, consult his physical and moral forces. In order to fight successfully the storms which so many seductions are bound to raise in his wife's heart, a husband should possess, besides the science of pleasure and a fortune that will permit him not to rank in any of the classes of predestinated men, robust health, exquisite tact, much wit and enough common-sense to exhibit his superiority only under favorable circumstances. To these qualities he should add a keen sight and sharp ears.

If he should have a fine figure, a handsome face and a manly

air and lack the other requisites, he would be classed among the predestinated ones just the same. So that an ugly husband whose face is, however, full of expression, would, if his wife has forgotten his ugliness once, be in the most favorable position to fight the genius of evil.

He must always strive, and here is an omission in Sterne's letter, to remain odorless, so as not to awaken disgust. Therefore must he be chary of perfumes, which always expose pretty women to insulting surmises.

He will have to study his manners and chasten his speech, as if he were the suitor of the most inconstant woman. It is for him that a philosopher made the following remark:

"Many a woman has been rendered unhappy for life, has ruined and dishonored herself because she has ceased to love a man who has killed himself in her eyes by being awkward in taking off his coat, cutting his nails or unfastening a button."

One of his most important duties is to hide from his wife the true state of his fortune, so as to be able to satisfy the fancies and whims she may have, like some generous bachelors.

Finally, most difficult task, task which requires super-human courage, he must wield the most absolute power over the donkey that Sterne refers to. That donkey must be as submissive as a serf of the thirteenth century to his master; must obey and keep silent, advance and retreat at the slightest word of command.

Equipped with all these advantages, a husband still can hardly enter the lists with any hope of success; like all the rest, he runs the risk of being, for his wife, a sort of responsible editor.

"What!" will exclaim some good people whose horizon extends no further than their noses, "must one take so much trouble to be loved; and is it necessary to go to a school before getting married? Is the Government going to found a chair of love as it has founded a chair of public law?"

This is our answer:

These rules so numerous and complicated, these minute observations, these notions so variable according to temperaments, pre-exist, so to speak, in the hearts of those who are

born for love, just as the sentiment of taste and I do not know what ease for combining ideas are to be found in the soul of the poet, the painter or the musician. The men who would be apt to consider the rules given in this Meditation irksome, are naturally predestinated, just as the man who cannot see the relation between two different ideas, is a fool. Indeed, love has its unknown geniuses just as war has its Napoleons, poetry its André Cheniers and philosophy its Descartes.

This last remark contains the germ of an answer to the inquiry which all men have propounded since a long time: Why are happy marriages so infrequent?

This phenomenon of the moral world rarely takes place, because there are so few people who possess genius. A lasting passion is a sublime drama played by two actors of equal talent, a drama in which sentiments are catastrophes, in which desires are events and in which the slightest thought brings about a change of scenery. Now, how is it possible to often find in the flock of bimanés which is called a nation, a man and a woman possessing in the same degree the genius of love, when it is already so hard to find talented people in the other sciences, where, in order to succeed, an artist need only be in harmony with *himself*?

Up to the present time, we have only touched upon the physical difficulties that two married people are apt to encounter in their quest for happiness; but what would it be were we to draw the terrible picture of the moral obligations which arise from differences in character? . . . Let us stop! The man adroit enough to guide his temperament will surely be master of his soul.

We shall suppose that our model husband has all the chief requirements needed to successfully compete with his rivals. We shall grant that he does not belong to any of the classes of predestinated husbands which we have reviewed. Let us be agreed, in a word, that he is imbued with all our maxims; that he possesses the admirable science some precepts of which we have revealed, that he was very wise when he married, that he knows his wife and is beloved by her; and let us continue the enumeration of all the general causes that

are apt to aggravate the critical position in which we intend to place him for the furtherance of the sum of human knowledge.

MEDITATION VI

CONCERNING BOARDING-SCHOOLS

IF you have married a girl educated in a boarding-school, you may add thirty more chances of being wretched to the enumeration of the preceding ones, and you are in the same position as a man who has thrust his hand into a wasp's nest.

Then, immediately after the nuptial ceremony, and without being taken in by the youthful grace and modest bearing of your bride, you should meditate upon, and follow, the maxims and directions which we shall set forth in the second part of this work. You should even practice the rigorous third part by beginning at once the strictest watchfulness, and constantly displaying a paternal solicitude, for the day after your marriage, nay, even the day before, there may have been *péril en la demeure*.

In fact, you must remember the secret and profound knowledge which schoolboys acquire concerning the nature of things, *de natura rerum*. Lapeyrouse, Cook or Captain Parry never had more desire to reach the poles than college youths display for the forbidden regions of pleasure.

As girls are shrewder and more curious than boys, their clandestine meetings and conversations, that all the art of matrons cannot prevent, must be planned with a genius a thousand times more infernal than that which directs boys. What man has ever heard the thoughts and sly remarks of these girls? They alone know those tricks through which they lose their innocence, those attempts and gropings toward voluptuousness, those phantoms of pleasure that may be compared to the attacks made by children upon the jars concealed in the maternal cupboard. A girl may be a virgin when she leaves her boarding-school, but she never leaves it chaste. More than once she has discussed in secret meetings the important question of lovers, and corruption has

necessarily entered her brain or her heart, be it said without antithesis.

Let us, however, grant that your wife has taken no part in these virginal pastimes. But, from the fact that she has had no voice in the councils of the "grown ones," shall we conclude that she is any better? No. She will have formed friendships with other young ladies and we shall be conservative in only granting her two or three intimate friends. Are you sure that after your wife has left boarding-school, her young friends have not been admitted to the secret meetings where the members endeavor to learn in advance, if only by analogy, the sports of turtle-doves? After a while, these friends marry; then you will have four women to watch instead of one, four characters to read, and you will be at the mercy of four husbands and a dozen bachelors whose lives, habits and principles are entirely unknown to you, when our Meditations will have shown you the necessity, which will confront you some day, of watching the people whom you married along with your wife, without being aware of the fact. Satan alone could have devised a boarding-school for girls in the midst of a large city! . . . Madame Campan, at least, had the good sense to locate her famous institution at Écouen. That wise precaution tends to show that she was by no means an ordinary woman. There, her charges were not able to view the museum of the streets, consisting of large and grotesque images and obscene words due to the pencil of the Evil One. Nor did they have constantly before their eyes the spectacle of human infirmities that is to be encountered at every street-corner, nor the secret poison distilled to them by the erotic and instructing books furnished by circulating libraries. Therefore, it was only at Écouen that this wise teacher was able to keep her charges pure and unsullied, if such a thing be possible. Perhaps you thought that it would be easy for you to prevent your wife seeing her schoolmates? She will meet them at balls, at the theater, at the promenade, in society; and how many services two women can render each other! . . . But we will meditate upon this new subject of terror at the proper time and place.

That is not all: if your mother-in-law placed your wife in a boarding-school, do you think that it was for her daughter's sake that she did so? A girl of twelve or fifteen summers is a terrible spy; and if the mother did not want a spy in her home, I shall begin to believe that madame your mother-in-law belongs indubitably to the most questionable portion of our nice women. So, in every respect, she is a bad example for her daughter and a dangerous counselor.

Let us stop! The mother-in-law requires a whole Meditation.

Therefore, no matter which way you turn, the conjugal bed is, in this instance, equally thorny.

Before the Revolution, a few aristocratic families sent their daughters to convents. Their example was followed by a number of people who imagined that, by having their daughters associate with the daughters of noblemen, they would naturally adopt their tone and manners. This error was first fatal to domestic happiness; then, the convents had all the drawbacks of the boarding-schools. Idleness is even far greater in the former than in the latter. The restrictions of a cloister inflame the imagination. Solitude is the very handmaiden of the Devil; and one cannot tell what ravages the most ordinary phenomena of life may produce in the minds of those idle, ignorant and dreamy young girls.

Some, by dint of caressing chimeras, give rise to the strangest blunders. Some others, having greatly exaggerated in their own minds the happiness that is supposed to come from being wedded, say to themselves. "What! is this all there is to it! . . ." when they are duly married. In any case, the incomplete idea that young girls brought up together form of the marriage state has all the dangers pertaining to ignorance and all the misfortunes that go hand in hand with science.

A young girl brought up at home by her mother or a virtuous maiden aunt, bigoted and of either an amiable or a sour disposition; a young girl who has never set her foot out of the house without being duly chaperoned, whose childhood has been spent in study and who is ignorant of everything, is one of those rare treasures that are to be encoun-

tered here and there in society, like the forest flowers that are so hidden from view by dense foliage that mortal eyes have never been able to behold them. He who, master of a flower so pure and suave, lets others cultivate it, has surely earned his deserts. He is either a monster or a fool.

It would be most proper now to see whether there is any way of marrying well and indefinitely avoiding the precautions which will be set forth in their *ensemble* in the second and third parts; but, has it not been duly proven that it is easier to read *l'École des femmes* in an hermetically closed oven, than to have a knowledge of the character, habits and thoughts of a marriageable young lady?

Do not most men marry exactly as if they were buying stocks at the Bourse?

And if, in the previous Meditation, we have succeeded in convincing you that the greater number of men remain in the most shocking apathy in regard to their own honor in point of marriage, is it reasonable to think that one will find many people who are rich enough, observing enough, and clever enough to lose, like Burchell in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, one or two years of their time studying the girls they are going to marry, when they pay so little attention to them after they have possessed them during the time that English people term the *honeymoon*, the influence of which we will not fail to discuss shortly?

However, as we have reflected a long time on this important matter, we beg to call attention to the fact that there are some more or less satisfactory ways of choosing a mate, even if you choose promptly.

For instance, there can be no doubt of the possibilities being in your favor:

1st. If you have chosen a young lady whose temperament is like the temperament of the women of Louisiana and Carolina.

In order to obtain certain information regarding the temperament of a young lady, it is necessary to put into practice the system mentioned by Gil Blas and used by a statesman to learn of conspirations or to find out how the ministers had passed the night.

2d. If you choose a young lady who, without being downright ugly, nevertheless does not belong in the class of pretty women.

We consider it a sure principle that, in order to be tolerably happy in wedded life, a sweet disposition and a passably ugly face are the first elements to be sought in a woman.

But do you want to learn the truth? Open Rousseau, for there is not one question of public morality the import of which he has not indicated in advance. Then read:

“Among nations which are moral, young girls are loose-lived, while married women are very strict. The contrary obtains among immoral nations.”

If the principle sanctioned by this true and profound remark were acted upon, there would be fewer unhappy marriages if men married their mistresses. If this should come to pass, the education of girls would have to be vastly modified in France. Until now, the French laws and customs having to choose between an offense and a crime to be warded off, have favored the crime. In truth, the misstep of a young girl is barely a misdemeanor when compared to the one of a married woman. Is there not a great deal less danger in giving freedom to girls than in giving it to married women? The idea of taking a girl on trial will provide more food for thought among serious-minded men than it will furnish matter for jesters. The customs of Germany, Switzerland, England, and the United States grant young girls a freedom which, in France, would be looked upon as highly immoral; nevertheless, it is certain that marriages in those countries are less unhappy than in France.

LV

“When a woman has given herself wholly to a man, she must know him whom love offered her very well. The gift of her esteem and confidence must necessarily have gone before the gift of her heart.”

Brilliant with truth, these lines perhaps illumined the dark cell in which Mirabeau penned them, and the fruitful observation that they contain, although due to the most fiery of his passions, nevertheless dominates the social problem

which engrosses us. Indeed, a marriage cemented under the religious auspices of the scrutiny that love supposes, and under the disillusion that follows upon possession, must be the most binding of all unions.

Then, a woman cannot reproach her husband with the legal right by virtue of which she belongs to him. She can no longer find in this forced submission a reason for giving herself to a lover, when later she finds in her own heart an accomplice whose sophisms seduce her by inquiring twenty times a day why, after having given herself against her will to a man she did not love, she should not give herself willingly to a man she does love. A woman can then no longer complain of the faults inherent to human nature, for she has found out in advance their tyranny and submitted to their caprices.

A great many girls will be disappointed in their hopes! . . . But will it not be of a great advantage to them not to be the mates of men whom they have a right to scorn?

Some alarmists will cry that such a change in our customs would authorize terrible public immorality; that laws, and customs, which dominate the laws, cannot really sanction scandal and immorality; and if unavoidable evils exist, society at least should not set its seal of approval upon them.

First of all, it is easy to answer that the proposed system tends to prevent these evils which, up to the present time, have been looked upon as unavoidable; but, however inaccurate the figures of our statistics may be, they have shown a terrible social state and our moralists must then prefer the greater evil to the lesser one, the violation of a principle upon which society rests, to a doubtful immorality among young girls; the dissoluteness of the mothers of families, which compromises at least four persons, to the dissoluteness of a young girl who only compromises herself and at most a child. Perish the virtue of ten virgins, rather than the holy purity and honor which should be the characteristics of every mother of a family! In the spectacle of a girl forsaken by her seducer there is something imposing and holy; it brings to mind broken vows, traduced confidence and,

on the wreck of even the most questionable virtue, weeping Innocence, which doubts everything when it must doubt the love of a father for his child. The unfortunate girl is still innocent; she may still become a faithful wife and tender mother; and if the past is dark, the future is as bright with hope as a pure sky. Is this brightness to be found in the somber picture of illegitimate love? In one case the woman is a victim, while in the other she is a criminal. Where is hope for the adulterous woman? If God forgives her, the most exemplary life can never be able to efface the living fruits of her crime. If James the First is the son of Rizzio, then the crime of Mary has lasted as long as her deplorable and royal house and the downfall of the Stuarts was only just.

But, really, does the emancipation of women hold so much danger?

It is easy to accuse a young girl of letting herself be deceived through a desire to escape spinsterhood at any cost; but this is only true in the actual state of our society. Nowadays, a young girl is ignorant of life and of its many pitfalls, her only stay is her weakness, and hearing the easy principles of the world, her imagination, governed by desires that everything combines to strengthen, is a guide all the more dangerous from the very fact that *a young girl rarely confides to anyone* the secret of her first love. . . .

If she were free, an unprejudiced education would arm her against the love of the undesirable man. Like all other people, she would be much more able to fight a known danger than a peril the extent of which she is ignorant of. Besides, does the mere fact that a girl is her own mistress imply that she will be any the less under the watchful eye of her mother? Must we also count for naught that modesty and fear which Nature has placed in the heart of a young girl to save her from the misfortune of belonging to a man who does not love her? Finally, where is the girl so little designing as not to know that the most immoral man wants his wife to have principles, just as masters want perfect servants, and that virtue, therefore, is the best and most fruitful of professions?

After all, what are we discussing? For whom do you think we are stipulating? For five or six hundred thousand virginities at the utmost, virginities that are armed with their fears and that have a very high opinion of themselves: they are as clever when they defend themselves as when they sell themselves. The eighteen million beings whom we decided to place outside of the question, almost all marry in accordance with the system which we would like to see prevail in our society; and as regards the intermediate classes by which our poor bimanies are separated from the privileged men who march at the head of a nation, the number of foundlings that these semi-comfortable classes cast upon humanity, has increased since peace has prevailed, if we are to believe Monsieur Benoiston de Châteauneuf, one of the most courageous among the scientists who have devoted themselves to useful but dry statistics. Now, to what a frightful condition of affairs are we supplying a remedy when one stops to think of the number of bastards that the statistics reveal to us, and of the misfortunes that our figures tell us must exist in society! But it would be hard to show here all the advantages that the emancipation of girls would bring in its wake. When we shall have arrived at the observation of all the circumstances that go hand in hand with marriage as we have conceived it, judicious minds will appreciate the true value of the system of education and freedom which we demand for girls in the name of reason and Nature. The prejudice that we harbor in France regarding the virginity of brides, is the silliest of all those that we still retain. The Orientals marry their wives without a thought as to their past and seclude them in order to be sure of the future; the French people put their daughters in a sort of seraglio defended by mothers, religious ideas and prejudices; and they give their wives the utmost freedom, thereby proving that they care much more for the past than for the future. It would only be a question of reversing our customs. Perhaps we might then end by giving conjugal faithfulness all the zest that the women to-day find in *liaisons*.

But this discussion would carry us too far from our subject, if we had to examine, in all its details, that immense

moral regeneration that France lays claim to in this twentieth century; for customs are so slow to improve! In order to obtain the slightest change, must not the boldest idea of the past century have become the most trivial one of the present one? Therefore, it is with a certain coquetry that we have broached this question, whether it be to show that it did not escape our attention, or whether it be to leave one more book to our descendants; and, really, here is the third reason: the first one concerns the courtesans and the second one is the physiology of pleasure:

*Quand nous serons à dix nous ferons une croix.**

In the present state of our society and imperfect civilization, there actually exists an unsolvable problem and one that renders any dissertation on the art of choosing a wife superfluous; we hand it over, like the rest, to the meditations of philosophers.

Problem

No one has as yet been able to decide whether a woman is moved to be unfaithful to her husband more through the impossibility to effect a change, than through the freedom accorded her in this respect.

Moreover, as, in this work, we have taken a man at the very moment when he has entered the bonds of matrimony, if he has married a woman with a sanguine temperament, a vivid imagination, a nervous constitution or an indolent character, his position would be all the more serious.

A man would be in a still more critical situation if his wife only drank water (see the Meditation entitled *Conjugal Hygiene*); but, if she should possess any vocal talent or if she were prone to catching cold, he would have reason to tremble; for it has been shown that singers are at least as passionate as women whose mucous systems are easily affected.

Finally, the peril would be greatly aggravated if your wife were less than seventeen years old; or, if her complexion

* When we reach ten we will make a cross.

were pale and muddy, for women with that sort of a skin are almost always deceitful.

But we do not wish to anticipate all the terrors which the diagnosis of such things will certainly cause in a husband's breast when he discovers certain characteristics in his wife. This digression has diverted me too long from the boarding-schools where all these misfortunes are hatched, which give forth so many girls totally incapable of appreciating the dreadful sacrifices by which the men who honor them by conferring their names upon them, attain wealth; girls craving luxury, ignorant of our laws and our ways, eager to grasp the power that their beauty gives them and ever ready to give up the true voice of genuine love for the spurious buzz of flattery.

May this Meditation fill all who have read it, whether out of idle curiosity or not, with a loathing for girls reared in boarding-schools, and if it accomplishes this, a great service will already have been rendered the cause.

MEDITATION VII

CONCERNING HONEYMOONS

IF our first Meditations have proved that it is almost impossible for a married woman in France to remain virtuous, the census of bachelors and predestinated husbands, our remarks on the education of girls and our cursory examination of the difficulties which attend the choosing of a wife, explain, to a certain degree, this national frailty. Therefore, after having frankly exposed the secret disease which is undermining our social body, we sought to discover its causes in our faulty laws, absurd customs, sluggish intellects and contradictions. An only fact remains to be considered; the spread of the trouble.

We arrive at the first principle by broaching the momentous questions contained in the honeymoon; and, just as it is the starting-point of all conjugal phenomena, it is also the link that holds our observations, axioms and problems

together, like so many rings scattered intentionally throughout the wise follies that our loquacious Meditations have uttered. The honeymoon shall, so to speak, be the climax of the analysis which we are going to undertake before letting our "champions" meet.

The expression "honeymoon" is an *anglicism* that will pass into every tongue, because it depicts so well the elusive nuptial season during which life is nothing but joy; like all illusions and errors, it is bound to remain, for it is the most odious of all lies. If it does present itself to us in the guise of a flower-decked nymph, soft and caressing, it is only because it is Misfortune itself; for, as we all know, Misfortune invariably overtakes us smilingly.

The married people who are going through life loving each other, cannot conceive of the honeymoon; for them, it does not exist, or rather, it exists all the time; they are like the immortals who could not grasp the meaning of death; but such bliss is entirely out of our province, and for our readers, marriage comes under the influence of two moons: the honeymoon and the April moon. The latter ends in a revolution which transforms it into a crescent, and when this shines upon a married couple, it is for all time.

How can the honeymoon shed its light on two people who do not love each other?

How does it set after it has once risen?

Do all married people have a honeymoon?

Let us answer these questions in their regular order.

The wonderful education that we give our daughters and the prudent customs which surround the taking of a wife, will now bear their fruit. Let us examine the circumstances which precede and accompany the least unfortunate marriages.

Our customs naturally develop in the girl whom you marry an excessive curiosity, but, as French mothers pride themselves on being able to expose their daughters to the flame without having them scorched, the latter's curiosity is quite naturally boundless.

A complete ignorance of the mysteries of marriage robs this naïve and sly creature of all knowledge concerning the

dangers which follow it; and matrimony being always presented as a period of mixed tyranny and freedom, enjoyment and sovereignty, her desires are increased by all the other interests in life which seek satisfaction; for her, getting married means being called from non-existence into life.

If she possesses the sentiment of happiness, religion and morality, the laws and her mother have repeatedly pointed out to her that this happiness can only come through you.

Obedience is always a necessity with her, even if it be not a virtue; she expects everything from you; in the first place, society condones woman's enslavement, but the latter does not even form the wish to be free, for she knows that she is timid, weak and ignorant.

Unless there has been some misunderstanding due to chance or some feeling of repulsion which it would be unpardonable in you not to have guessed, she will desire to please you; she does not know you.

Finally, to facilitate your triumph, you marry her at a time when Nature sometimes solicits with energy the pleasures which you alone can dispense.

I ask it of any reasonable creature, would a demon gather the elements of perdition around an angel whose downfall he had planned, as solicitously as our customs conspire against the happiness of a husband? . . . Are you not, like a king, surrounded by flatterers?

Given over with all her desires and ignorance to a man who, even though he be in love, cannot and must not know her secret and delicate ways, will that young girl not be shamefully passive, submissive and complaisant during all the time her young imagination leads her to await the pleasure or the happiness that may perhaps never materialize?

In this strange position in which the laws of society and of Nature are in conflict, a young girl obeys, submits and keeps silent out of self-interest. Her obedience is speculation; her complaisance, hope; her devotion, a sort of vocation by which you benefit; and her silence is generosity. She will be the victim of your whims as long as she does not understand them; she will suffer from your character until she has studied it; she will sacrifice herself without

loving you, because she believes in the factitious passion which possession causes you to display for a time; but she will not be silent when she fully recognizes the futility of her sacrifices.

Then, one fine morning, you will see all the wrong ideas which underlie your union, spring up like so many branches bent by a weight which is lightened by degrees. You imagined that the negative existence of a young girl waiting for happiness was love; she met your desires in the hope that you would meet hers, and did not dare complain of her secret unhappiness, because she believed that she must be at fault. Who is the man who would not be deceived under such circumstances, especially when the deception has been prepared so long in advance? The young wife is innocent, and is both an accomplice of the deception and a victim of it. You would have to be a God in order to escape the snares with which Nature and society surround you. Is not everything a pitfall in you, and around you? For, in order to be happy, must you not repulse the impetuous desires of your senses? And where is that powerful barrier which the little hand of a woman whom you have *not possessed*, erects to ward them off? . . . Thus you have made your troops parade when there was nobody to watch them; you have set off fireworks the frame of which is the only thing that remains when your guest appears to admire them. In regard to the pleasures of marriage, your wife was like a Mohican at the Opera; the instructor is bored as soon as the savage begins to comprehend.

LVI

When married, the time that two hearts can understand each other is as fleeting as lightning and never comes back when once it has flown.

That first trial of married life, during which a woman is encouraged by the hope she has of happiness, by the novel feeling of her wifely duties, by the desire to please, by virtue, which is so persuasive when it shows Love agreeing with Duty, is called the *honeymoon*. How can it last long between two people who have associated themselves for life with-

out knowing each other perfectly? It is certainly surprising that all the deplorable absurdities which our customs heap around the marriage-bed, do not result in still more hatred.

But, that the existence of the wise man is like a peaceful stream and that of the fool like a raging torrent; that the child who has gathered all the roses in his path, finds only thorns upon his return; that the man who, in his wild youth, has recklessly spent a million, cannot, during the remainder of his life, enjoy the forty thousand franc income that the money would have given him, are trivial truths when one thinks of morality, and new ones, when one thinks of most men's conduct. See in them the true image of every honeymoon; 'tis their history, 'tis the fact and not the cause.

But that men, endowed with a certain intellect through a privileged education, accustomed to deep thinking in order to shine in politics, literature or art, in business or private life, who marry with the intention of being happy and governing their wives through love or might, should all fall into the same trap and be fooled, after having enjoyed happiness during a brief period, is a problem the solution of which must reside rather in the unknown depths of the human soul than in the material truths by which we have sought to explain these phenomena. The perilous quest for the secret laws which nearly all men must break in this circumstance, still offers enough glory to the man who fails in this enterprise for us to try our luck. And we shall.

In spite of all that fools have to say about the difficulty which lies in explaining what *love* is, it nevertheless has principles as hard and fast as geometry; but, as each character modifies them to suit itself, we accuse it of the innumerable caprices which our organizations create. If we were to see only the varied effects of light without perceiving the underlying principle, a great many people would refuse to believe in the progress of the sun and in its unity. Therefore, let the blind protest as much as they like; I pride myself, like Socrates, without being as wise as he, on only knowing love; and I shall try to deduce some of its precepts, to save married, or eligible, people, the trouble of racking their brains, for they would be exhausted too quickly.

Now, all our previous observations resolve themselves into one proposition that may be considered the first or the last term, as one wishes, of this secret love theory, which might end by tiring you unless brought to a prompt close. This principle is contained in the following formula:

LVII

Between two people susceptible of love, the duration of passion is in proportion to the initial resistance of the woman, or the obstacles which social circumstances place in the way of your happiness.

If a woman yields to your passion in a day, your love for her may not last three nights. Where are we to look for the cause of this law? If we will take the trouble to cast about us, we will see that proofs abound: in the vegetable world, the plants which take longest to grow are the ones which live the longest; in the moral realm, the works completed yesterday, are destined to die to-morrow; in the physical domain, the womb which violates the laws of gestation, yields a dead fruit. In everything, a lasting work is one which requires much time in its formation. A long future demands a long past. If Love is a child, then Passion is a man. This universal law, which rules Nature, beings and sentiments, is precisely the one which all marriages infringe, exactly as we have shown. This principle has created the love fables of the Middle Ages: the Amadis, Launcelots and Tristrams of the legends, whose wonderful constancy seems so fabulous, are the allegories of this national mythology which our imitation of Greek literature killed in the bud. Those gracious figures brought into being by the imagination of the troubadours, consecrated this truth.

LVIII

We have enduring love only for the things which have cost us much time, effort and desire.

All that our Meditations have revealed to us regarding the causes of this primordial law of love, reduces

itself to the following axiom, which is both principle and consequence:

LIX

In all things, we receive only in proportion to what we give.

This last principle is so evident in itself, that we shall not try to prove it. We shall only add one remark, which, in our estimation, is not lacking in importance. The man who said: *Everything is true and everything is false*, has proclaimed a fact that the human mind, naturally sophistical, interprets after its own fashion, for it would seem as if human things had as many sides as there are intellects to consider them. This is the fact:

There is not a law in creation that is not balanced by a contrary one: life is always solved by the equilibrium of two contending forces. Thus, in the subject we are studying, *love*, it is certain that, if you give too much, you will not receive enough. The mother who shows too great a love for her children creates ingratitude within them; ingratitude comes perhaps from the inability to acquit oneself. The woman who loves more than she is loved, will necessarily be downtrodden. Lasting love is the love which holds the forces of two individuals in equilibrium. Now, this equilibrium can always be established: the one who loves the most must remain in the sphere of the one who loves the least. And, after all, is it not the sweetest sacrifice that a loving soul can make if love can agree to this inequality?

Does not a wonderful sentiment of admiration arise in the soul of the philosopher when he discovers that there is perhaps only one principle in the whole world, as there is only one God, and that our ideas and affections are subject to the same laws that cause the sun to travel onward, the flowers to bloom and the universe to throb! . . .

Perhaps one should seek in this metaphysic of love the reasons of the following proposition, which throws the most brilliant light on the question of honeymoons and April moons:

Theorem

Man passes from aversion to love; but, when he has begun by loving and then reaches the stage of aversion, he never goes back to love.

In certain human organizations, sentiments are as incomplete as is thought in certain sluggish imaginations. Therefore, just as minds are endowed with the faculty to grasp the connection between things without drawing conclusions, to consider each connection separately without putting them together, to observe, compare and express; just so, souls are able to conceive of sentiments in an imperfect manner. Talent in love, like in all other arts, consists in the mingling of the power to conceive and the power to execute. The world is full of people who sing songs without refrains, who have *half-ideas* and *half-sentiments* and who do not co-ordinate their affections any more than they do their thoughts. They, in a word, are incomplete beings. Join a fine intellect to a poor one, and you are preparing some calamity; for equilibrium must be found in everything.

We shall leave to boudoir philosophers and back-shop wiseacres the pleasure of seeking the thousand ways by which temperaments, minds, social situations and fortune destroy the equilibrium, and examine the last cause that influences the honeymoon when it sets and the April moon when it rises.

Life contains a principle that is more potent than life itself. It is a movement, the rapidity of which proceeds from an unknown impulsion. Man knows no more about the secret of that rotation, than the earth is initiated into the causes of its revolutions. That, *I know not what*, which I am inclined to call the *current* of life, carries away our dearest thoughts, uses up the will power of the greatest number and drags us along in spite of ourselves. Take, for instance, a man with common-sense, a tradesman, who is most punctilious about paying his notes; that man will be laid to rest in his coffin for having neglected the simple daily practice of taking the proper remedy which would have

saved him from death, or, what is even more horrible, disease. Yet that man repeated every night: "Oh! to-morrow, I will surely not forget to take my pills!" How are we to explain that strange fascination which dominates us through life? Is it lack of energy?—the most iron-willed men are subject to it; lack of memory?—the people who possess this faculty in a marked degree are slaves to it.

This fact, which every man can detect in his neighbor, is one of the causes which exclude most men from a honeymoon. The wisest husband, the one who may have escaped the manifold pitfalls which we have already mentioned, sometimes cannot avoid the snare that he has thus laid for himself.

I have observed that men regard marriage and its dangers much in the same way in which they regard the subject of wigs; and there may be a formula for human life in the following thought sentences concerning wigs:

First period.—Will my hair ever be white?

Second period.—At any rate, if my hair turns white, I shall never wear a wig. Goodness! how awfully a wig does look!

One fine morning you hear a young voice exclaim:

"Why, you have a white hair! . . ."

Third period.—Why not wear a skillfully made wig that would deceive everyone? There is some sort of merit in deceiving people; besides, a wig is warm and prevents a man catching cold, etc.

Fourth period.—The wig is so skillfully adjusted that you deceive all the people who do not know you.

Your wig preoccupies you and every morning your conceit renders you the rival of the most skilled barbers.

Fifth period.—The wig is neglected. Goodness! what a bore to have to take off that wig every night and put it on again in the morning!

Sixth period.—The wig reveals a few gray hairs; it wobbles and the casual observer notices a white line that forms a decided contrast to the darker shade of the wig which is lifted by the collar of your coat.

Seventh period.—The wig looks like quitch-grass, and, excuse the expression, you do not care a tinker's dam about it!

“Monsieur,” says one of the powerful feminine intellects which have deigned to help me over some of the most obscure passages of my book, “what do you mean by that wig?”

“Madame, when a man ceases to care for his wig he is . . . he is . . . what your husband probably is not.”

“Well, my husband is not . . .” (She thought.) “He is not agreeable; he is not . . . very well; he is . . . cross; he is . . .”

“Then, madame, he must be indifferent about his wig.”

We looked at each other, she, with well-feigned dignity and I, with a slight smile.

“I see,” said I, “that one must singularly respect the ears of women, for they are the only chaste things that they possess.”

I assumed the manner of a man who has something important to reveal and the fair lady lowered her eyes as if she knew full well that she would be obliged to blush during my discourse.

“Madame, to-day we would not hang a minister as they did in olden times, for a *yes* or a *no*; a Châteaubriand would hardly torture Françoise de Foix, and we no longer wear a sword at our side to avenge insults. Now, in a century in which civilization has made such rapid progress, in which we are taught any science in twenty-four lessons, everything is bound to have followed the impulse toward perfection. We therefore cannot imitate the rough, coarse and virile speech of our ancestors. The age in which such fine fabrics are woven, such elegant furniture is manufactured, such rich porcelains are produced, must be the age of periphrase and circumlocution. Therefore, we must try to coin some new word to take the place of the comical expression Molière used; because, as a contemporaneous author puts it, the language of that great man is too broad for ladies who find that gauze is too thick for their garments. Now, society people, as well as scientists, are familiar with the innate taste of the Greeks for mysteries. That poetical nation was able to give fabulous aspects to the ancient traditions of its history. At the voice of the rhapsodists, who, at the same

time were poets and romancers, the kings became gods and their gallant escapades were transformed into immortal legends.

“According to Monsieur Chompré, the classical author of the *Dictionnaire de Mythologie*, the labyrinth was ‘an inclosure planted with trees and decorated with constructions arranged in such a manner that, when a young man once got into it, he could not find his way out again.’ Here and there, a few delightful arbors rose before his eyes, but, among alleys which crossed each other in every direction and presented the same appearance to the eye, among thorns and rocks and bushes, the patient had to struggle with an animal called the Minotaur. Now, madame, if you will do me the honor of remembering that the Minotaur was of all the horny beasts the one that mythology regarded as the most dangerous; that, in order to avoid the ravages which it made, the Athenians had promised to yield it fifty virgins every year; you will not share the error of Monsieur Chompré, who considers the labyrinth a sort of English garden; and you will recognize in this ingenious fable a delicate allegory, or, we had better say, a faithful and distressing picture of matrimony. The paintings recently discovered in Herculænum have conclusively proved this opinion. Indeed, for a long time, scientists believed that the Minotaur was a beast half-man and half-steer; but the fifth plate of the Herculænum paintings shows us this allegorical monster with the entire body of a man and only the head of a bull; and in order to allay all doubts, it is prostrated at the feet of Theseus. Well, madame, why should we not ask mythology to help out the hypocrisy that is taking hold of us and preventing us from laughing in the hearty fashion of our forbears? Thus, when a young woman in society has not known enough to deftly spread the veil with which a nice woman covers her conduct, there where our forefathers would have used a single word to express the situation, you and all the rest of your fair sisters will only say: ‘Ah! yes, she is very agreeable, but . . . But what? . . . But she is often very *inconsistent*. . . .’ I searched a long time, madame, for the meaning of this word and especially for the

figure of rhetoric by which you make it express the opposite of what it means; but my search was vain. So *Vert-Vert* was the last one to utter the word that our ancestors used and he unfortunately addressed himself to innocent nuns, whose escapades did not in the least touch the honor of husbands. When a woman is inconsistent, her husband, in my opinion, is *minotaurized*. If he is a gentleman and enjoys the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and many men really deserve pity, then, in speaking of him, you add in a little gentle voice: 'Monsieur A—— is a very nice man, and his wife is very pretty, but people say that he is quite unhappy with her.' Thus, madame, the man who is unhappy in his home, the man who has an *inconsistent* wife, or the *minotaurized* husband, are simply husbands after the pattern that Molière drew. There, goddess of modern taste, do those expressions strike you as being transparently chaste enough? "

"Ah, *mon Dieu*," quoth she, smiling, "if the fact remains, what does it matter whether it be expressed by one word or by a hundred? "

She made me a little mocking curtsy and withdrew to join the preface countesses and all the rest of the metaphorical creatures so often used by writers to find or compose old manuscripts.

As for you, more substantial and less numerous creatures, if among you there are some who side with my conjugal champion, I warn you that you will not have your homes wrecked all at once. A man reaches that conjugal temperature by degrees and imperceptibly. Many husbands have been unhappy during the whole of their married lives without knowing it. This domestic revolution always follows certain lines; for the revolutions of the honeymoon are as sure as those of the celestial body and apply to all couples. Have we not proved that moral nature has its laws, the same as physical nature?

Your young wife will never, as we have already said somewhere in this work, take a lover without giving serious consideration to the matter. At the time when the honeymoon is waning, you have developed the sentiment of pleasure in her without having satisfied it; you have opened the book

of life, and she readily pictures, from the prosiness of your love, the poetry which must result from the combination of affection and passion. Like a timid bird which is still terrified by the sound of shots which have long ceased, she sticks her head out of the nest, looks around and sees the world; and knowing the key to the charade which you have played, she instinctively feels the void of your lukewarm passion. She divines that it will only be with a lover that she will be able to recapture the delightful use of her free-will in matters of love.

You have been drying green wood for a future blaze.

In the position in which you both find yourselves, there is not one woman, no matter how virtuous she may be, who does not think that she is worthy of a great passion, who has not dreamed of it, and who does not believe that she is very susceptible; for there is always some vanity in exaggerating the strength of a conquered foe.

“If the profession of being a nice woman was only perilous,” an old lady once said to me; “but it is also a bore, and I have never yet met the virtuous woman who did not think she was being fooled.”

So—even before a lover presents himself—a woman argues on the legitimacy of the situation, so to speak; she goes through a struggle in which duty, law, religion and secret desires all rend her soul. There begins a new order of things for you; there is the first warning which Nature, that kind and indulgent mother, gives to all creatures when they are exposed to any danger. Nature has attached a bell to the neck of the Minotaur, just as she has put rattles on the snake which is the dread of all travelers. Then arise in your wife what we shall name the *first symptoms*, and woe to him who has not known how to cope with these! Those who, after reading this book, remember having seen them manifest themselves in their homes, may pass on to the end of the book, for there they will find consolation.

This situation, in which a couple remains during a more or less lengthy period, will be the starting-point of our work, as it is the end of our general observations. A clever man must be able to know the signs, the mysterious indications

which a woman then gives; for the Meditation which follows will only be able to indicate the essential points to neophytes in the sublime science of matrimony.

MEDITATION VIII

CONCERNING THE FIRST SYMPTOMS

WHILE your wife is in the crisis which we have just described, you are lulled by an absolute and delightful feeling of security. You have gazed upon the sun so often, that you are beginning to believe that it may shine for everyone. You no longer give the same attention to your wife's least action that you gave when you were in the flush of passion.

This indolence prevents many husbands from perceiving the symptoms by which their wives announce the coming storm; and that frame of mind has minotaurized more husbands than opportunity, divans, closed carriages and town apartments put together. That indifference to danger is, in a way, produced and justified by the apparent calm which surrounds you. The conspiracy directed against you by the million famished bachelors seems to be unanimous in its progress. Although all those gay blades are foes to one another, and not one of them knows the other, still, a sort of instinct has given them the password.

When two young people marry, the myrmidons of the Minotaur, young and old, generally have the courtesy to leave them alone. They look upon the husband as upon a workman whose duty it is to shape, polish and cut the diamond which afterward will be passed from hand to hand, to be admired by many people. Therefore, the sight of a devoted young couple always gladdens the hearts of those bachelors who are called *roués*; they are very careful not to interfere with the work which society at large is going to profit by; they also know that heavy rains do not last long; so they keep in the background, watching with wonderful shrewdness for the time when the bride and groom begin to tire of their seventh heaven of delight.

The tact with which bachelors discover the moment when the wind turns in a household, can only be compared to the sluggishness of husbands whose honeymoons are on the wane. Even in gallantry, there is a maturity that it is well to await. The really great man is the one who can judge circumstances. Those middle-aged men whom we have depicted as being so dangerous, understand very well, for instance, that the man who wishes to become the lover of a woman, and is proudly rejected at first, will be received with open arms three months later. But it is true that, generally speaking, married people show their coldness with the same *naïveté* with which they display the contrary feeling.

When you were loitering with madame in the delightful paths of the seventh heaven, where, according to one's temperament, one remains for more or less time, as the preceding Meditation shows, you went in for society very rarely or not at all. Happy in your home, if you went out at all, it was only to go on some lover-like trip with your bride. As soon as you make your appearance in society, together or alone, as soon as people see you attending dances and fêtes, and all those amusements created in order that one may escape from loneliness, the bachelors surmise that your wife is seeking distraction; therefore, her home and her husband must bore her.

Then, the bachelor knows that half the battle is won. Then, you are on the very brink of being minotaurized and your wife is inclining toward inconsistency: which means, on the contrary, that she will be very consistent in her conduct, that she will reason it out with wonderful depth, and that you will be absolutely unaware of the whole proceeding. From that time on, she will not fail in any of her duties, and will all the more seek the appearances of virtue, because she lacks it. Alas! mourned Crébillon:

*Doit-on donc hériter de ceux qu'on assassine! **

She has never before been so eager to please you as now. She will try to compensate you for the secret wound which

** Must we really inherit from those we slay!*

she thinks of inflicting on you, by little delights that are to make you believe in the continuance of her love: thence springs the proverb: "As happy as a fool." But, according to their characters, women either scorn their husbands, for the very reason that they deceive them successfully; or they hate them, if they are opposed; or they feel indifferent to them, a sentiment which is a thousand times worse than hatred.

In these circumstances, the first diagnosis is a great eccentricity in the woman. She will be inclined to run away from herself, to flee from her home, but without displaying the anxiety for distraction which characterizes the very unhappy wife. She dresses with much care, in order, she explains, that she may flatter your vanity by attracting all eyes to herself when in society.

When she is at home, you will notice that she is in turns pensive and depressed, happy and exuberant, or as grave as a German soldier marching to battle. Such frequent changes invariably announce the terrible hesitation that we have mentioned.

There are some women who read novels so as to gorge themselves with the always varied pictures of a love that rises above all obstacles, or in order to accustom themselves in advance to the dangers of an intrigue.

She will profess to have the highest regard for you. She will tell you that she loves you like a brother; that this reasonable sentiment is the only true, the only lasting one, and that the sole end of marriage is to establish it between man and wife.

She will see very cleverly that she only has duties to perform and that she has rights which she may exert.

She looks upon all the details of connubial bliss with a coldness that you alone can appreciate. Perhaps she has never enjoyed it very keenly, and besides, it is something which is always at hand; she knows it, she has analyzed it; and how many slight but convincing proofs come to a clever husband to show him that this frail creature argues and reasons, instead of being carried away by passion!

LX

The more one judges, the less one loves.

Thence spring those jokes that make you laugh and those thoughts which surprise you by their depth; thence come those sudden changes and those whims of an unsettled determination. Sometimes she becomes very tender, as if she repented her thoughts and her plans; sometimes she is cross and capricious; in a word, she accomplishes the *varium et mutabile femina* that, until now, we were foolish enough to attribute to their constitutions. Diderot, wishing to explain these almost atmospherical variations of women, went so far as to claim that they proceeded from what he terms the *wild beast* in them; but you will never see these anomalies in a happy woman.

These symptoms, which are as flimsy as gauze, resemble those clouds which barely tint the azure of the sky and which are called *fleurs d'orange*. Soon the colors deepen.

In the midst of this solemn Meditation, which tends, according to the expression of Madame de Staël, "to put more poetry into the humdrum prose of life," a few women, in whom their mothers, out of a sense of duty, sentiment or design, planted tenacious principles, believe that the devouring ideas which assail them are suggestions of the Evil One. Then you can see them trotting off to mass, to vespers and all the other divine services. This false piety begins with the purchase of dainty prayer-books by which the fair sinners strive in vain to perform the duties of religion which they forsook for the pleasures of matrimony.

Here we will give a principle and we request you to engrave it with fiery letters upon your memory.

When a young wife suddenly begins to take up the religious practices she had abandoned, it always means that this new phase of conduct hides a motive of the greatest importance to the husband's peace of mind. Out of one hundred woman, there are at least seventy-nine in whom this unexpected revival of interest in the Lord proves that they have been *inconsistent* or that they are about to become so.

But a clearer and more decisive symptom, and one that every husband will recognize, unless he is an idiot, is this one:

At the time when both of you were submerged in the deceitful delights of the honeymoon, your wife, like a true mistress, was always ready to do your bidding. Happy to be able to show you a good-nature that both of you mistook for love, she hoped that you would only request her to walk on the roof, and in a minute, as lithe as a squirrel, she would have obeyed your command. In a word, she took a keen delight in sacrificing the *I* which made her a different being from *you*. She had identified herself with you, thereby obeying that cry of the heart: *Una caro*.

All those fine resolutions have disappeared one by one. Hurt at the idea that her will is being annihilated, your wife will try to reconquer it by means of a system gradually developed and which becomes more energetic daily.

It is the system of *a married woman's dignity*. The first effect of the system is to bring about a certain reserve in your pleasures and a certain coolness which you alone can appreciate.

You may have discovered during the honeymoon, that is, if you were passionate, a few of the twenty-two pleasures which, in olden times, gave rise to twenty-two kinds of courtesans devoted to the special cultivation of those delicate branches of an only art. Ignorant and *naïve*, curious and expectant, your young wife may herself have become an adept in this science, which is as rare as it is unknown, and which we particularly recommend to the future author of the *Physiology of Pleasure*.

But, one fine morning, just like the army of birds that dread the rigors of our northern climes, away flies the *Fellatrice*, who appeases the desires a little in order to prolong them; the *Tractatrice* who hails from the perfumed Orient, where dreamy delights are in honor; the *Subagitatrice*, a daughter of Greece; the *Lémane* with her caressing voluptuousness; the *Corinthienne* who could, if necessary, take the place of all the other ones; and lastly, the irritating *Phicidisseeuse*, whose teeth are devouring and mischievous,

their very enamel seeming to be intelligent. One, perhaps, has remained; but, one night, the brilliant and fiery *Propétide* spreads her white wings and flies away, with bowed head, showing you for the last time, like the angel who vanishes before the eyes of Abraham, in Rembrandt's painting, the ravishing treasures which she herself ignores, and which you alone gazed upon with rapture and fondled caressingly.

Weaned from all these shades of pleasure, from all those whims of the soul, you are reduced to the most vulgar means of love, to that primitive and innocent aspect of matrimony, that pacific homage that the ingenuous Adam rendered our common Mother and which no doubt suggested to the Serpent the idea of sharpening her wits. But such a complete symptom is not frequent. Most couples are too proper to follow the customs of ancient Greece. Therefore, we have included in the *last symptoms* the appearance in the peaceful conjugal bed of those bold caresses which, most of the time, are the offspring of an illegitimate passion. At the proper time and place, we shall treat more fully of this enchanting diagnosis; here, it may perhaps assume a repulsion and an indifference which you alone are capable of appreciating.

At the same time that she ennobles, by her dignity, the ends of marriage, your wife pretends that she is entitled to her opinion, the same as you are entitled to yours. "When a girl marries, she will say, she must not abdicate her reason. Are women really to be slaves? Human laws have been able to enslave the body, but not the spirit! . . . Ah! God has placed it too near Himself, for tyrants to lay their hands upon it."

These thoughts proceed necessarily either from a too liberal education, which you have allowed her to acquire, or from deductions which you have permitted her to make. An entire Meditation has been devoted to the *education of the wife*.

Then your wife begins to say: "*My room, my bed, my apartment.*" To a great many of your questions she will answer: "My dear, it does not concern you in the least!" Or: "Men have their part in the running of a house and women have theirs." Or, ridiculing the men who take an

interest in household matters, she will pretend that "men know nothing about certain things."

The number of things that you do not understand will increase every day.

One fine morning, you will find two altars instead of one in your little chapel. Your altar and your wife's will have become distinct and this distinction will grow and grow by virtue of the system of wifely dignity.

Then will come the following ideas, which will be implanted in you in spite of your protests, by the virtue of a *live force*, very ancient and little known. Steam-power, horse-power, and water-power are fine inventions; but Nature has equipped woman with a *moral* power with which the others cannot be compared: we shall call it *the power of the rattle*. It consists in a perpetuity of sound, in the exact repetition of the same words, in the complete rotation of the same ideas, until, by dint of hearing the same thing over and over, you will agree with everything, in order to end the discussion. Thus, *the power of the rattle* will prove to you:

That you are indeed lucky to have such a fine wife;

That, when your wife consented to marry you, she did you a great honor;

That women have often a keener insight than men;

That you should always listen to your wife's advice and almost always follow it;

That you must *respect* the mother of your children, honor and trust her;

That the best way not to be deceived, is to trust in your wife's delicacy, for, according to certain time-honored beliefs, which we are weak enough to credit, it is impossible for a man to prevent his wife being unfaithful to him, if she be so inclined;

That a wife is a man's best friend;

That a woman is mistress in her own house, queen of her salon, etc. Those who desire to oppose a firm resistance to these encroachments on man's power, fall into the category of predestinated husbands.

In the first place, there will be quarrels which will invest the husband with a tyrannical appearance; and the tyranny

of a husband is always a splendid excuse for the inconsistencies of a wife. Then, in the ensuing discussions, they always manage to prove to their own families as well as to ours, and to the world in general, that we are in the wrong. If, in order to restore peace, or through love, you recognize the pretended rights of women, you give your wife an advantage which she will never fail to use. Husbands, like governments, must never admit that they are in the wrong. Then, your power would be superseded by the occult system of feminine dignity; then, all would be lost; from that very minute, she would go from concession to concession until she would drive you from *her* bed.

As women are clever, witty and malicious, and have all the necessary time to think out some fine sarcasm, she would turn you into ridicule during the momentary clash of your opinions. The day she ridicules you, will see the last of your contentment. Your happiness will be at an end. A woman who has laughed at her husband, can never love him. For a woman to love a man, he must be a being full of strength, greatness and dignity. Families cannot exist without despotism. Nations, think this over!

Therefore, the way in which a man must act in the presence of portentous events, and the high policy of marriage, will form the second and third part of our book. That rosary of marital machiavellism will teach you how to make an impression on that flighty mind, on that *âme de dentelle*, as Napoleon was wont to say. You will learn how a man may display steely determination in this little domestic warfare, without compromising either his will or his happiness. Indeed, should you abdicate, your wife would only scorn you as a creature without backbone; you would cease being a *man* in her eyes.

But we have not, as yet, arrived at the proper time for developing the theories and principles by which a husband can conciliate elegance of manner and strenuousness of purpose; therefore, let us be content, for the present, in foreseeing the importance of the future, and let us continue.

At this fatal time, you will see her adroitly establishing her right to go out alone.

Once, you were her idol and her God. Now, she has reached the stage when she can discover holes in the garments of the saints.

"*Mon Dieu*," said Madame de la Vallière to her husband, "how ill you carry your sword! Monsieur de Richelieu has a knack of making his hang straight at his side, that you should try to imitate; it is in far better taste."

"My dear, it would be impossible to say more wittily that we have been married five months!" replied the Duke, whose answer made a sensation under the reign of Louis XV.

She will study your character in order to find weapons against you. This study, which is so foreign to love, will be shown by the thousand and one little snares that she will provide for you, in order to make you speak roughly to her and scold her; for, when a woman lacks an excuse to minotaurize her husband, she will invent one, if she can.

Perhaps she will sit down to dinner without waiting for you.

If she should be passing through a city, she will call your attention to things that you had not noticed; she will sing in your presence without the least fear; she will interrupt you, will not reply, and will prove to you, in a hundred different ways, that she is in the possession of all her faculties and in her right mind when she is with you.

She will endeavor to do away completely with your opinion in household matters, and will attempt to gain entire possession of your fortune. In the first place, it will be a distraction for her empty or disturbed soul; and then, she will find in your opposition a new motive for ridicule. She will not lack expressions that have done duty many times before, and, in France, we yield so quickly to the sarcastic smile of our neighbor!

From time to time, she will have headaches and hysterics; but these symptoms will be discussed in a separate Meditation.

In society, she will speak of you without blushing and will look at you with assurance.

She will begin to criticise your slightest actions, because they will be contrary to her ideas or to her secret intentions.

She will no longer care about your belongings, and will not even know whether or not you are provided with the necessities of life. You will no longer be the hero of all her comparisons.

In imitation of Louis XIV., who used to present his mistresses with bouquets of orange-blossoms that his gardener left on his table every day, Monsieur de Vivonne almost daily gave his wife rare blossoms during the first part of their married life. One evening, he found the posy lying neglected on a table, without having, as usual, been placed in a vase full of water.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "if I have not already been made a fool of, I soon will be."

You leave home for a short trip, and you receive no letter, or, if you do get one, it contains three blank pages—a symptom.

You arrive mounted on a thoroughbred horse, of which you are very fond, and between two kisses, your wife inquires about the horse and its food—a symptom.

To these traits, you can add a number of other ones. In this book, we shall endeavor to do fresco work and let you supply the miniatures. These indications will vary infinitely, according to character. Such and such a man will discover a symptom in the way his wife puts on her shawl, while another one will have to get a blow on his soul before he will be able to realize the indifference of his mate.

One fine spring morning, after a ball, this critical situation will reach its climax. Your wife is plainly bored and the permissible delights of marriage no longer attract her. Her senses, her imagination, the whim of Nature, perhaps, all call for a lover. However, she does not quite dare to embark herself in an intrigue the consequences and details of which frighten her. You are still to be reckoned with, although you do not count for much. On the other hand, the lover appears invested with all the charm of novelty and mystery. The struggle that has arisen in the heart of your wife, becomes, in the presence of the foe, more real and more deadly than ever. Soon, the more dangers there are to face and the more risks there are to run, the more she

is inclined to hurl herself into the delightful abyss of fear, anguish and voluptuousness. Her inflamed imagination sparkles. Her future takes on mysterious and romantic colors. Her soul finds that life is more interesting during this discussion so fraught with weight to women. Everything agitates her soul, everything totters within her. She lives three times more than before and judges the future by the present. The little pleasure you gave her, is a plea against you; for the delights she experienced do not irritate her as much as those which she looks forward to. Does not her imagination picture wonderful happiness with that lover whom the laws prohibit? Lastly, she finds delight in her terrors, and terrors in her delight. Then, she likes the imminent danger, the sword of Damocles which you dangle above her head, and she prefers the delirious agonies of an illegitimate passion, to the inane connubial life which is worse than death, to the indifference that is less a sentiment than it is the absence of all sentiment.

You who, perhaps, have business in the Ministry of Finance, or at the Bourse, or at the Bank, or at the Chamber of Deputies; you, young man, who so ardently repeated the vow contained in our first Meditation to protect your happiness by protecting your wife, what can you oppose to those natural desires? For these creatures of fire, to *live* is to *feel*; when they *feel* nothing, they are *dead*. The law by virtue of which you are endowed with motion, produces in her that involuntary *minotaurism*. "It is," said d'Alembert, "a consequence of the law of motion! Well, then, where are your means of defense? . . . Where are they, I ask?"

Alas! if your wife has not quite kissed the Serpent's apple, the Serpent is near at hand; you are asleep, we are awake, and our book begins.

Without examining how many husbands in the five hundred thousand mentioned in this work have remained among the predestinated; how many have made undesirable marriages; how many have made mistakes at the outset; and without stopping to see whether, in this numerous army, there are many or few who possess the requirements necessary to

struggle successfully against the approaching danger, we shall proceed to develop, in the second and third part of this book, the means to fight the Minotaur and to preserve the virtue of married women. But, if fatality, the Devil, celibacy and opportunity ordain your downfall, you may find consolation in following the order of all intrigues, and in contemplating the struggles which take place in every household. A great many people are blessed with such happy dispositions, that, to show them the place and to explain the whys and wherefores is all that is necessary to make them scratch their heads, rub their hands, stamp their feet and go about their business in a cheerful mood.

MEDITATION IX

EPILOGUE

FAITHFUL to our promise, this first part has deduced the general causes that make all marriages reach the stage which we have just described; and the while we traced the ins and outs of these matrimonial conditions, we indicated the way to escape the catastrophe, by outlining the mistakes which engendered it.

But these primal considerations would most certainly be incomplete, unless, after having tried to throw a little light on the inconsistency of our ideas, our customs and our laws, regarding a question which touches the life of almost every human being, we endeavored to establish, by a short peroration, the political causes of this social infirmity! After having *exposed* the secret vices of the institution, is it not also a philosophical analysis to seek *why* and *how* our customs have *rendered* it vicious?

The system of laws and customs which nowadays rules women and marriage in France, is the fruit of ancient traditions and beliefs which are no longer in harmony with the eternal principles of reason and justice developed by the great Revolution of 1789.

Three great commotions have convulsed France: the Ro-

man invasion, Christianity, and the invasion of the Franks. Each event left deep traces in the soil, the laws, the customs and the spirit of the nation.

Greece, having one foot in Europe and the other in Asia, was influenced in her choice of matrimonial institutions by her passionate climate; she received them from the Orient, where her philosophers, legislators and poets went to study the veiled antiquities of Egypt and Chaldea. The absolute seclusion of women, made necessary by the scorching sun of Asia, dominated in the laws of Greece and Ionia. Woman remained imprisoned in marble harems. As the country only comprised one city, a very small territory, the courtesans, who were identified with art and religion, were able to satisfy the passions of the few young men whose strength was besides absorbed by the violent exercises required by the military art of those heroic ages.

At the beginning of its royal career, Rome, having sought in Greece the principles of a legislation still adapted to southern climes, imprinted on the brow of the married women the seal of complete servitude. The Senate realized the importance of virtue in a republic, and obtained great strictness of habits through an excessive development of marital and paternal power. The dependence of women was to be found everywhere. Oriental seclusion became a duty, a moral obligation, a virtue. From this attitude, sprang the temples erected to Modesty, and the temples consecrated to the sanctity of marriage; the censors, the dowry institution, the sumptuary laws, the respect for matrons, and all the clauses of Roman law. Therefore, three attempted or accomplished rapes caused three revolutions; therefore, it was a great event, solemnized by decrees, when women appeared on the political stage! Those illustrious Romans, condemned to be only wives and mothers, spent their lives in seclusion and occupied themselves with the education of the budding masters of the world. Rome had no courtesans, because the Roman youths were absorbed by constant warfare. If, later on, dissoluteness crept in among them, it only came with the despotism of the Emperors; and the old customs still had such influence that Rome never saw women on the stage.

These facts will not be lost in this rapid history of marriage in France.

After the Gauls had been subdued, the Romans imposed their laws on the defeated nation; but they were powerless to destroy the deep respect in which our ancestors held womankind, and the ancient superstitions that made of women the direct mouthpieces of the Divinity. However, the Roman laws finally got the upper hand, excluding all others, in that land of "written right" as it used to be called, which represented the *Gallia togata*, and their marital customs penetrated more or less into the countries "of custom."

But, during this struggle of customs against laws, the Franks were invading Gaul, to which they gave the sweet-sounding name of France. Those warriors from the North imported their system of gallantry born in Occidental regions, where the mingling of the sexes, under icy climes, does not require the plurality of wives and the jealous precautions of the Orient. Far from that, with them, those almost idolized creatures warmed private life with the eloquence of their sentiments. Their sluggish senses demanded that variety of energetic means, that diversity of action, that irritation of thought and those chimerical barriers created by coquetry, a system some principles of which were developed in this first part, and which is admirably adapted to the temperate climate of France.

To the Orient, then, belong passion and delirium, long, flowing tresses and seraglios, amorous divinities, pomp, poetry and monuments. To the Occident, feminine independence, the sovereignty of blonde locks, gallantry, witches, sorcerers, profound ecstasy of the soul, and the gentle emotions of melancholy and enduring love.

These two symptoms, which started from opposite points of the globe, fought their struggle in France; in France, where part of the soil, the *langue d'oc*, could acquiesce in the Oriental customs, whereas the other, the *langue d'oïl*, was the home of those traditions which attribute magic power to women. In the *langue d'oïl*, love demands mystery; in the *langue d'oc*, to see is to love.

In the very midst of the conflict, Christianity triumphed in France, was preached by women and consecrated the divinity of a woman who, in the forests of Brittany, of Vendée and of Ardennes, took, under the name of "Our Lady," the place of more than one idol in the heart of the druidical oaks.

If the religion of Christ, which is, above all, a moral and political code, gave a soul to all beings, proclaimed their equality before God and strengthened by its principles the chivalrous doctrines of the North, that advantage was balanced by having the Sovereign Pontiff reside in Rome, whose heir he instituted himself, by the universality of the Latin tongue, which became, in the Middle Ages, the language of all Europe, and by the powerful interest that the monks, the scribes and the lawyers had in making the codes found by a soldier in the pillage of Amalfi, triumph.

The two principles of servitude and sovereignty of women were thus in conflict, mutually strengthened by new weapons.

The salic law, that legal error, made civil and political servitude triumph, without in the least affecting the power that custom had conferred upon women, for the enthusiasm which seized Europe in regard to chivalry, upheld the customs against the laws.

Thus were formed the strange phenomena that our national character and legislation present; for, since those epochs which, to a philosophical mind considering history, seem to be the dawn of the Revolution, France had been prey to many convulsions: Feudalism, the Crusades, the Reform, the struggle of royalty and aristocracy, of despotism and fanaticism, have brought such pressure to bear upon her, that woman has remained the target of the contradictory conditions born of the conflict of the three principal events which we have outlined. Could any thought be given to woman, to her political education and marriage, when Feudalism menaced the throne, when the Reform threatened both, and when the nation was forgotten between the *sacerdoce* and the empire? According to an expression of Madame Necker, women, through all these great and trying events, were like the sawdust put in cases containing

chinaware; it is counted for naught, and still, without it, everything would be wrecked.

The married woman in France then presented the spectacle of an enslaved queen, of a slave freed, but still a prisoner; the contradictions produced by the conflict of the two principles flared up in the social body and gave rise to thousands of strange incidents. Then, as woman, physically, was not very well known, all sickness in her was connected, in the popular mind, with witchcraft, miracles or general nefariousness. Then, those creatures who, in the eyes of the law, were but prodigal children, to be put under guardianship, were deified by the customs. Like the freedmen of the emperors, they disposed of crowns, battles, fortunes, *coups d'état*, crimes, virtues by the sole glance of their eyes, and yet they possessed nothing, not even themselves. They were equally happy and unhappy. Armed with their weakness and strong through their instinct, they flung themselves out of the sphere where the law placed them, and showed themselves all-powerful for evil and powerless for good; without merit in their enforced virtue, without excuse in their vices; accused of ignorance and deprived of education; not wholly mothers, nor yet wholly wives. Having all due time to hatch and develop passions, they obeyed the coquetry of the Franks, while they were compelled, as Romans, to remain within the walls of their castles and raise warriors. As no system was strongly developed in the legislation, every mind followed its own bent, and one saw as many Marion Delormes as Cornelias, as many virtues as vices. They were beings as incomplete as the laws that ruled them: considered, by some, as intermediary links between mankind and beasts, as hurtful animals that the law could not down enough, and that Nature had, along with many others, put at the entire disposal of man; considered, by others, as exiled angels, sources of happiness and love, as the only creatures that answered the longings of man and whose wretchedness was to be counteracted by worship, how could the unity which did not prevail in the political institutions exist in the customs?

The Revolution was too busy tearing down and erecting,

had too many foes, or was still perhaps too close to the deplorable times of the Regency and of Louis XV., to be able to examine the place that woman should occupy in the social order.

The remarkable men who built the wonderful monument of our Code were almost, without exception, old students of legislation, who were struck by the importance of the Roman laws; and besides, they were not founding political institutions.

Sons of the Revolution, they believed, with it, that the divorce law, wisely restricted, and the faculty of *soumissions respectueuses* were sufficient improvements. With the old order of things still before their mind's eye, these new institutions were considered marvelous.

To-day, the question of the triumph of both principles, very much weakened by so many events and the progress of enlightenment, remains entirely in the hands of wise legislators. The past contains a lesson which will bear fruit in the future. Will the eloquence of facts be lost on us?

The development of Oriental principles required eunuchs and seraglios; the bastard customs of France brought in their train the evil of courtesans and the greater evil of our marriage system; thus, to use the ready-made sentence of a contemporary, the Orient sacrifices to the paternity of men and to justice; France, to women and modesty. Neither France nor the Orient has attained the goal that those institutions aimed at: happiness. The man who owns a harem is no more beloved by the women who compose it, than the Frenchman is sure of being the father of his children; and marriage is not worth its cost. The time has arrived when nothing more should be sacrificed to that institution, when a larger sum of happiness should be introduced into the social body, by the conforming of our customs and institutions to our climate.

Constitutional government, a happy mingling of two extreme political systems, despotism and democracy, seems to point out the necessity of also confounding the two conjugal principles which, so far, have always clashed. The

freedom which we have boldly demanded for young girls is a remedy for all the evils we have shown, by exposing the contradictions produced by the slavery to which young women are subjected. Let us give back to Youth passions and coquetry, love and its terrors, love and its delights, and the captivating procession of the Franks. At that spring-like season of life, no false step is irretrievable; Hymen will come out of the fray armed with confidence, disarmed of hatred, and love will then be justified by useful comparisons.

In this change of our customs, the shameful evil of prostitution will die a natural death. It is especially at the time when a man possesses the candor and bashfulness of youth, that it is important for his happiness that he should meet and struggle against great and true passions. The soul is glad of its efforts, no matter what they may be; providing that it be alive and sensitive, it does not care if it does have to exert its power against itself. In this observation, which anybody can make for himself, there exists a secret of legislation, of tranquillity and of happiness. And then, nowadays, study has taken on such development that even the most ardent of future Mirabeaux can bury his energy in a passion and in science. How many young men have been saved from dissipation through strenuous labor, joined to the ever-recurring obstacles of a first and hopeless love? Indeed, where is the young girl who does not want to prolong the delightful childhood of sentiments, who is not proud of being known, and who has not to oppose the intoxicating fears of her timidity, the modesty of the secret transactions of her heart, to the impetuous desires of a lover as inexperienced as she? The gallantry of the Franks and its pleasures will thus be the appanage of youth, and then will come about quite naturally that conformity of mind, soul, character, habits, fortune, and temperament which spells the equilibrium necessary to the welfare of marriage. The system would be founded on a much stronger and more solid basis, if girls were subjected to a wisely regulated exheredation; or if, to compel men to make their choice according to the pledges of happiness that some girls would offer

through their virtues, their characters or their talents, all young women were married without dowries.

Then, the system of the Romans might be applied without inconvenience to the married women, who as girls, will have taken advantage of their freedom. Exclusively intrusted with the rearing of children, the most important occupation a mother can have, occupied every instant in bringing forth and maintaining that happiness so admirably depicted in the fourth book of *Julie*, they, in their households, will be like the old Romans, living images of a Providence that is felt everywhere, but that remains invisible. Then, the laws regarding the faithlessness of married women should be most stringent. They should inflict more infamy than afflictive and coercive penalties. France has seen women mounted on asses for pretended crimes of witchcraft and more than one innocent victim died of shame during the process. There lies the secret of the future legislation of marriage. The daughters of Milet cured themselves of marriage by death; the Senate condemns suicides to be dragged naked over a rack and virgins condemn themselves to life.

Women and marriage will only be respected in France when the radical change in customs that we implore, has taken place. That deep thought is the one that animated the two finest productions of an immortal genius. The *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* are nothing but two eloquent pleas in favor of this system. That voice will sound through the ages because it guessed the true motives of the laws and customs of future centuries. By attaching children to their mothers, Jean-Jacques was already rendering an immense service to virtue; but his century was already too deeply attacked by moral gangrene to fully understand the marvelous lessons that those two poems taught; we should add, however, that the philosopher was conquered by the poet, and that, by leaving traces of the former love in the heart of married Julie, he was carried away by a poetical situation much more pathetic than the truth he wanted to develop, but far less useful.

However, if marriage in France is an immense contract by which all men tacitly agree to give more flavor to pas-

sion, more curiosity and mystery to love, more spice to woman, if she be more an ornament, a fashion-plate, a clothes-rack, than a being whose functions in the political order can be co-ordinated with the prosperity of a country, with the glory of the fatherland, and whose attainments might be as useful as those of men. . . . I acknowledge that all these theories and lengthy considerations would vanish before such important destinies! . . .

But we have pressed the grounds of past events enough in order to extract a drop of philosophy, we have sacrificed sufficiently to the dominating passion of the times for *history*, so let us direct our glance toward present customs. Let us take up the jingling cap, and the hobby which Rabelais made a scepter of, and let us pursue this analysis, without giving to a jest more gravity than it can encompass and without endowing serious matters with more levity than they admit of.

PART SECOND

CONCERNING INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR MEANS OF DEFENSE

To be or not to be— . . .

—SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*

MEDITATION X

TREATISE ON MARITAL POLICY

WHEN a man reaches the position which the first part of the book places him in, we suppose that the idea that his wife yields herself up to another man can still make his heart beat, and that his love will be rekindled either by conceit or egotism or interest, for, if he *did not* care about his wife, he would be the worst of men and would richly deserve his fate.

In this long crisis, it is very hard for a husband not to commit mistakes; as, in the opinion of most men, the art of governing a wife is even more difficult than that of selecting one. However, marital policy consists only in the application of three principles which must form the very essence of your conduct. The first one is never to believe what a woman says; the second is to fathom the motive of all actions without stopping at the appearances; and the third is never to forget that a woman is never so loquacious as when she is silent, and never more energetic than when she is in repose.

From now on, you are like a horseman who, mounted on a fractious steed, must never let his eyes wander from its head, unless he wants to be unseated.

But the art consists far less in knowing the principles than in applying them: to reveal them to ignorant people is like letting a monkey toy with a razor. Therefore, the first and most vital of your duties consists in a constant dis-

simulation which most husbands usually lack. When they notice any disquieting symptoms in their wives, nearly all men show an insulting distrust, their characters assume an acrimony which pierces through their manners and their speech; and fear in their souls is like a gas-jet under a glass globe—it lights up their faces as powerfully as it explains their conduct.

Now, a woman who has twelve hours of the day in which to reflect and to observe you, reads the suspicion in your soul as soon as it is formed. She will never forgive that gratuitous insult. There is no remedy now; all has been said; and the very next day, if the opportunity should present itself, she would go over to the ranks of “inconsistent” women.

You should, in the respective position of the two beligerent forces, begin by displaying toward your wife all the unbounded trust which you used to repose in her; but, if you try to keep up the deception with honeyed words, you are lost, for she will never believe you; she is following a policy, just the same as you. You will have to show as much tact as good-nature in your actions, before you will be able to throw her off her guard and instill that precious feeling of security which will lead her to lay back her ears and prompt you to use the curb and the spurs only when most needed.

But how dare compare a horse, which is the most candid of all creatures, to a being whose thoughts and affections render it, at times, more prudent than the Servite Fra-Paolo, the most terrible consulter that the Ten ever had in Venice; who is more secretive than a king, more cunning than Louis XI.; deeper than Machiavelli; as sophisticated as Hobbes; of easier virtue than the betrothed of Mamolin, and who, of all the world, only mistrusts you?

Therefore, to this dissimulation, by which the motives of your conduct must become as invisible as those of the universe, it will be necessary for you to add complete control over yourself. The diplomatic imperturbability so vaunted in Monsieur de Talleyrand, will be the least of your achievements; his exquisite courtesy, his graceful manners will have to be repeated in all your actions. The professor

here expressly forbids the use of the crop, if you want to get the best results from your pretty Andalusian.

LXI

That a man should beat his mistress . . . 'tis only a self-inflicted injury; but his wife! . . . 'tis suicide.

How is it possible to conceive of a government without marshalsea, an action without force, a disarmed power? . . . That is the problem which we shall try to solve in our future Meditations. But there are still two preliminary remarks to be submitted to you. They will give you two other theories which will enter into the application of all the mechanical means the use of which we shall propose to you. A living example will refresh these arid and dry dissertations: will it not be leaving the book to operate on the spot?

In the year 1822, on a fine morning in January, I was walking along the boulevards from the Marais to the elegant regions of the Chaussée-d'Antin, noticing for the first time and not without philosophical pleasure, those strange gradations of faces and that variety of costumes which, from the Rue Pas-de-la-Mule to the Madeleine, make, of each portion of the boulevard, a world apart from the others, and of all that Parisian zone, a large sample-card of customs. Having still no idea of the things of life, and not having the least suspicion that some day I would have the overweening conceit to set myself up as a legislator of marriage, I planned to lunch with one of my college friends who had, perhaps prematurely, taken unto himself a wife and two children. As my former professor of mathematics lived at a short distance from the house in which my friend resided, I thought I would pay a visit to that worthy savant before yielding my stomach to all the delicacies that friendship was preparing for me. I entered easily into the very heart of his study, where everything was covered with dust, that duly attested the honorable distractions of the scientist. I was to have a surprise. I caught sight of a fair lady sitting on the arm of a chair as if it were an English saddle-

horse; she made me the little conventional grimace that hostesses reserve for those whom they do not know; however, she could not disguise the annoyance that my entrance had caused her, sufficiently for me not to perceive the undesirability of my presence. Occupied no doubt with some equation, my master had not raised his head: so I waved my hand like a finn at the young woman and backed toward the door on tip-toe, the while I smiled a mysterious smile which meant: "*I shall certainly not prevent you from rendering him faithless to Urania.*" She made a motion with her hand that cannot be described.

"My dear friend, don't go," exclaimed the geometrician; "this is my wife!"

I immediately bowed! . . . O Coulon, where were you that you could not see the only one of your pupils who, at that moment, understood your expression of *anacreontic* applied to a curtsy! The effect must have been great, for Madame the *Professorin*, as the Germans say, blushed and hastily arose, after making a slight bow which seemed to say: "Adorable! . . ." Her husband detained her by saying:

"Remain, child. It is one of my pupils."

The young wife bent her head toward her husband like a young bird waiting to be fed.

"It isn't possible," quoth her spouse, heaving a sigh; "and I will prove it to you by $A + B$."

"Eh! monsieur, pray do not do that," she said, winking her eyes and looking at me.

If it had only been algebra, my master would have understood that glance, but it was Chinese to him and so he went on:

"My child, I will let you be the judge; our income is ten thousand francs a year. . . ."

As soon as I heard this, I retired toward the door as if I had suddenly developed a great interest in the panels which I started to examine with a critical eye. My discretion was rewarded by an eloquent glance. Alas! she did not know that I could have played the part of *Fine-Oreille*, in *Fortunio*, who could hear the truffles grow.

"The principles of general economy," said my master,

“demand that only two-tenths of the income be spent on the rent and on the servants’ wages; now, our apartment and our help cost us one hundred louis. I allow you twelve hundred francs for your dress.” (Here he accented each syllable.) “The household,” he continued, “takes four thousand francs; the children require at least twenty-five louis; and I only keep eight hundred francs for myself. The laundry, the heating and light come to about one thousand francs; consequently, there remain, as you see, only six hundred francs for incidental expenses. In order to purchase the diamond cross, we would have to take a thousand francs out of our capital; now, once we begin to do that, my dear, there would be no reason why we should not soon leave Paris, which you are so devoted to, as it would not take us long to be compelled to live in the provinces in order to economize. The children and the expenditures will grow enough without that! Now, be reasonable!”

“I see that I must,” she said, “but you will be the only man in Paris who has not given his wife a New Year’s gift!”

And she scampered off like a scholar who has just finished a penum; my master nodded his head in approval. When the door had closed, he rubbed his hands with glee; we chatted of the war with Spain, and I proceeded to the Rue de Provence, without thinking that I had just received the first part of a great conjugal lesson, any more than I thought of the conquest of Constantinople by General Diebitsch. I arrived at the home of mine hosts just as they were going to seat themselves at the table, after having waited the half-hour which is prescribed by gastronomical edicts. It was while she was slicing a *pâte de foie gras* that, I believe, my fair hostess said to her lord, in a deliberate tone:

“Alexandre, if you were really nice, you would present me with that diamond sprig which we saw at Fossin’s.”

“See what it is to get married!” laughed my friend, as he drew out three one thousand franc notes from his wallet and held them in front of his wife’s shining eyes. I cannot resist the pleasure of giving them to you any more than you can resist the pleasure of taking them. To-day

is the anniversary of the day we first met! Perhaps the diamonds will remind you of it!"

"You naughty man," she said with a sweet smile.

She put her hand in her bosom and drew out a bunch of violets which she threw in my friend's face with childish *espièglerie*. Alexandre handed her the price of the sprig and said:

"I saw the flowers! . . ."

I shall never forget the rapid gesture and genuine delight with which the little woman grasped the notes, like a cat that puts its paw on a mouse; making a little roll of them, she put them in the place the violets had occupied a moment before. I could not help thinking of my professor of mathematics. I could only see, between him and his pupil, the difference which exists between a prudent and an extravagant man, without thinking for a moment that the one who, to all appearances, knew how to reckon the best, was really the one who reckoned the worst. So the lunch progressed merrily. Soon we were sitting in a little, freshly-decorated parlor, before a fire that spread a delightful warmth, and I felt compelled to speak a few complimentary words on the furnishing of the little den.

"It is a pity that it all costs so much!" exclaimed my friend; "but the nest must be worthy of the bird! Why, if you please, are you complimenting me on furniture that is not paid for? You make me remember, while I am digesting my food, that I owe two thousand francs to the rascally upholsterer.

At these words, the hostess threw a rapid glance on her surroundings; and her face, from joyful that it was, became reflective. Alexandre took my hand and led me to the window.

"Have you a thousand francs that you could lend me?" he asked in a low voice. "I only have an income of twelve thousand francs and, this year . . ."

"Alexandre!" called the fair creature, and she flew up to where we stood and held out the bank-notes; "Alexandre, I see too well that it is folly . . ."

"What are you bothering about?" he replied; "keep the money."

"But, love, I am ruining you! I ought to know that you love me too much to allow myself to confide my foolish wishes to you."

"Keep it, my dear, I can afford it. Bah! I will play this winter and will make it up!"

"Play!" she gasped, with an expression of terror on her face. "Alexandre, take back those notes! Yes, sir, I mean it."

"No, no," replied my friend, as he pushed away her delicate white hand; "are you not going Thursday to the ball given by Madame de——?"

"I will keep your request in mind," said I to my friend. And I departed, after taking leave of his wife, but I noticed from the scene that was in preparation, that my *anacreontic* curtesies would produce very little effect.

"He must be mad," thought I, as I left the house, "to ask a law student for a thousand francs!"

Five days later, I found myself at Madame de ——'s, whose balls were acquiring a great social vogue. In the midst of the quadrilles, I caught sight of the mathematician's wife and the wife of my friend. Madame Alexandre wore a charming frock; white muslin and flowers composed it. She also wore a little gold cross fastened to a black velvet neck-ribbon, which enhanced the marble whiteness of her skin, and long gold earrings hung in her ears. On the neck of the *Professorin* shone a magnificent diamond cross.

"This is strange," quoth I to a person who had never read the book of life nor the heart of a woman.

That person was myself. If I was possessed of the desire to dance with those two women, it was solely because I foresaw a subject of conversation which lent me boldness.

"*Eh! bien*, madame, you have your cross?" said I to the first lady.

"Yes, but I certainly earned it!" she replied with an undefinable smile.

"What! no diamond sprig?" I said to my wife's friend.

"Ah!" she said, "I enjoyed it during a whole lunch! But, as you see, I finally prevailed upon Alexandre——"

"Was he easily seduced?"

She looked at me triumphantly.

Only eight years afterward, that scene which, at first, had been meaningless to me, came back to my mind; and in the glow of candles and diamond aigrettes, I distinctly read its moral. Yes, a woman hates to be convinced; but when anyone persuades her, she feels a sort of fascination and remains in the rôle which Nature intended her to fill. To be won over, means to grant a favor; but exact arguments irritate and kill her; to direct her, a man must make use of the power which she herself so often uses: sensibility. Therefore, it is in his wife, and not in himself, that a man will find the elements of despotism: just as in the preceding example, he should turn her against herself. To know how to offer a bauble so as to have it returned, is a secret which applies to the smallest details of existence.

Let us now pass on to the second observation.

"The man who knows how to rule one woman can rule one hundred thousand," says an Indian proverb; and I shall amplify this Asiatic wisdom by saying: *Whoever can govern a woman can govern a nation.* There is, in fact, a great analogy between the two governments. Should not a husband's policy be like unto a king's? Do we not see them trying to amuse the public in order to better frustrate it of its liberty; throwing food at it for a day to make it forget the wretchedness of a whole year; preaching that it must not steal, the while it is being robbed; and saying: "I think that, if I were the nation, I would be virtuous!"

It is England which will furnish us the *precedent* which must be introduced into households. Those who have eyes to see must have noticed that since *governmentability* has been improved in that country, the Whigs have rarely had a chance to be in power. A long Tory policy has always succeeded an ephemeral Liberal cabinet. The orators of the national party are like rats trying to gnaw through the panel of a rotten door where the hole is stuffed up every time they think they are going to reach the lard and nuts in the royal cupboard. Woman is the Whig of your government. In the position in which we left her, she must naturally

aspire to the conquest of more than one privilege. Close your eyes to her intrigues, let her exhaust her strength trying to climb the steps of your throne; and when she imagines that she is grasping the scepter, just push her gently back and say, "Bravo!" and let her hope for another and early victory. This system must be used in corroboration with all the other means that you may choose to bring into play to train your wife.

These are the general principles that a husband should follow if he does not wish to err in his little kingdom.

Now, in spite of the minority of the council of Macon (Montesquieu, who had perhaps divined constitutional government, has said, I cannot recollect in what work, that common-sense in assemblies is always on the side of the minority), we shall distinguish in woman a soul and a body, and we will begin by studying the means of mastering her moral nature. In spite of opinions to the contrary, the action of thought is nobler than that of the body; therefore, science shall have the preference over cookery and instruction over hygiene.

MEDITATION XI

CONCERNING THE INSTRUCTION OF WOMEN

WHETHER or not to instruct women, such is the question. Of all those we have considered, it is the only one that offers two extremes without a middle course. Science and ignorance, these are the two unreconcilable terms of the problem. Between the two, it seems as if we could see Louis XVIII. counting the felicities of the thirteenth, and the misfortunes of the nineteenth, century. Seated in the middle of the scales which he knew so well how to incline in his own favor, he beholds at one end a lay-brother, the apathy of a serf, the shining hoofs of a knight's steed; he thinks he hears the cry of: "*France et Mont-Joie-Saint-Denis!*" but he turns around to smile at the conceit of a tradesman, a captain of the "Garde Nationale"; at the elegant carriage

of the stockbroker; at the unpretentious clothes of a French peer who has turned journalist, while his son is being educated at the École Polytechnique; at the costly stuffs, the newspapers, the steam machinery; and he sips his coffee from a Sèvres cup in the bottom of which gleams a golden "N" surmounted by a crown.

"Away with civilization! away with thought!" is your cry. You ought to despise education in women for the good reason (which is so popular), that it is easier to govern a nation of idiots than a nation of well-informed people. A brutalized nation is happy; when the sentiment of liberty is lacking, its storms and carking cares are also unknown; such a nation is like a polypus; it can divide itself into various fragments; each of these forms a complete and living nation, ready to be governed by the first blind man who happens along with a scepter in his hand.

What produces that human marvel? Ignorance: despotism maintains itself only through ignorance, for it needs silence and darkness. Now, happiness in marriage is the same as in politics, negative. The affection of a nation for the king of an absolute monarchy is perhaps less unnatural than a woman's faithfulness to her husband after she has ceased to love him; now, we know that Love is just entering your window. So you will be obliged to put into practice the salutary rigors by which Monsieur de Metternich prolongs his *statu quo*; but we would advise you to apply them with still more tact and amenity than he did; for your wife is a great deal shrewder than all the Germans put together and quite as voluptuous as the Italians.

Therefore, you must try to postpone as long as you can the fatal time when your wife will ask you for a book. It should be an easy task for you. First, you should pronounce with contempt the word "blue-stockings"; and at her request, you should then explain to her the ridicule which attaches to that appellation in the minds of our neighbors.

Then, you should tell her very often that the wittiest and most charming women of the world are to be found in Paris, where no woman ever reads a book;

That women are like people of quality, who, according to

Mascarille, know everything without ever having learned anything;

That a woman while at a ball or a card-party should know enough to pick up the ready-made phrases of talented men which go to make up the wit of fools who have no wit of their own;

That, in this country, decisive judgments on men and things are passed along from one person to another; and that the little cutting tone that a woman employs to criticise an author, destroy a work, or scorn a picture, has more effect than a judgment of the Court;

That women are fair mirrors and quite naturally reflect the most brilliant ideas;

That natural wit is everything, and that one can learn more by being in society than by reading the cleverest books;

That too much reading is bad for the eyes, etc.

To let a woman read the books that appeal to her mind! . . . Why, it would be like setting fire to a haystack; in fact, it is worse, for it is teaching your wife to do without you and to live in an imaginary world, in a sort of paradise. For what do women read? Passionate books; the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques, novels and all the things that act most powerfully on their sensitive natures. They care neither for reason nor for mature fruits. Now, have you ever thought of the phenomena which are produced by these poetical readings?

Novels, as well as other books, depict things and sentiments with much more brilliant colors than Nature offers. That sort of fascination springs less from the desire of each author to appear perfect by affecting refined and delicate ideas, than from an undefinable process of our intellect. It is man's fate to refine everything which he carries into the domain of thought. What figures, what monuments are not embellished by decoration? The soul of the reader helps in this conspiracy against the truth, either through the deep silence he enjoys or the fire of the conception, or the purity with which the pictures are reflected in his mind. Who, in reading the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques, has not beheld Madame de Warens prettier than she really was? It would

seem as if our souls caressed forms seen previously under other and fairer skies; they only look upon the creations of other minds as wings which enable them to take flight into space; the most delicate trait is rendered still more so by being appropriated; and the most poetical expression of images becomes enriched by other still purer ones. To read, is to be a joint creator. Those mysteries of the transubstantiation of ideas, are they the instinct of a higher vocation than our present destinies? Is it the tradition of a former life that has been lost? What could that have been, if the reminder is so delightful?

Therefore, when reading novels and dramas, a woman, who is so much more susceptible to enthusiasm than we are, must experience intoxicating ecstasy. She creates for herself an ideal existence in the light of which everything else fades; she is not slow in trying to realize her voluptuous dreams, and in transporting their magic into her daily life. Involuntarily, she passes from the spirit to the letter, and from the soul to the senses.

And you would have the foolishness to believe that the manners and sentiments of a man like yourself, who, most of the time, dresses and undresses and . . ., etc., before his wife, could successfully combat the sentiments of those books and the fictitious lovers whose garments bear no stains? Poor fool! too late, alas, for your own and her misfortune, your wife will discover that the *heroes* of fiction are as rare as the *Apollos* of sculpture!

A great many husbands will be at loss to know how to prevent their wives reading, and there are even some who pretend that this kind of thing has its advantages, as it enables them to know what their wives are doing, while they are reading. First, you will note, in the following Meditation, how a solitary life renders a woman belligerent; but, have you never met one of those unpoetical creatures who petrify their poor mates by reducing life to a mechanical proposition? Study the speeches of these great men, learn by heart the marvelous arguments by which they condemn poetry and the pleasures of the imagination.

But, if in spite of all your efforts, your wife should per-

sist in her desire to read—then you should immediately put at her disposal all the books you can think of, from the ABC book of her baby to *Réné*, which will be more dangerous in her hands than *Thérèse Philosophe*. You might disgust her forever with literature by giving her nothing but tiresome works; you could plunge her into hopeless idiocy with *Marie Alacoque*, *la Brosse de Pénitence*, or with the popular songs of the time of Louis XV.; but later, you will find in this book so much to take up your wife's time, that reading of any kind will be impossible for her.

And, first of all, you will notice the immense resources that the education of women has prepared for turning your wife from the passing fancy for science. Examine with what admirable stupidity girls lend themselves to the results of the education that has been imposed on them; we hand them over to maids, companions and governesses who have a dozen lies of false modesty and coquetry to teach them against one true and noble idea. The girls are brought up like slaves and grow accustomed to the thought that they have been brought into the world to imitate their grandmothers, to raise canaries, compose botany albums, water rose-bushes, embroider or make collars. Therefore, although a little girl of ten may be as wise as a boy of twenty, she is nevertheless awkward and timid. She is afraid of a spider, will say meaningless nothings, think of nothing but dress and will never have the courage to be a devoted mother or a faithful wife.

Here is the course that has been pursued: they have been taught to color roses and to embroider scarfs in a way to earn eight sous a day. They learned French history in the Ragois, chronology in *Les Tables du Citoyen Chantreau* and their young imaginations have been allowed free rein in regard to geography; all this, in order that nothing dangerous to the peace of their hearts be taught them; but, at the same time, their mothers and governesses never stopped repeating to them that all a woman needs to know is how to arrange the fig-leaf which Eve, our mother, used for her personal adornment. They have heard nothing for fifteen years, said Diderot, but: "Daughter, your fig-leaf does not

look well ; daughter, your fig-leaf looks well ; daughter, would it not look better thus? ”

Therefore, keep your wife in that fine and noble sphere of knowledge. If, by chance she wanted a library, buy her Florian, Malte-Brun, *Le Cabinet des Fées*, *Les Mille et une Nuits*, *Les Roses* by Redoute, *Les Usages de la Chine*, *Les Pigeons*, by Madame Knip, the great work on Egypt, etc. In a word, follow the witty advice of the princess who, on hearing of a riot brought about by the high price of bread, exclaimed: “ Why don't the people buy *brioches*? ”

Perhaps your wife will reproach you one evening with being surly and unentertaining ; perhaps she will tell you that you are delightful, after you have said something foolish ; but this is a very slight drawback of our system ; and besides, what does it matter to you that the education which women receive in France is the greatest of absurdities and that your marital *obscurantism* has made you take a doll unto yourself? As you lack the courage to undertake a far nobler task, is it not better to drag your wife along in a rut than to try to have her scale the heights of love? She may be a fine mother, but you do not exactly care to have your children turn out like the Gracchi, only to really be *pater quem nuptiae demonstrant*: now, in order to help you in this, we must make of this book an arsenal where every man can choose the proper weapons to fight the genius of evil which is always ready to flare up in the soul of a wife ; and, considering everything, as ignoramuses are the bitterest foes of woman's education, this Meditation will be a sort of breviary for most husbands.

A woman who has received a man's education possesses, in truth, the most brilliant and fertile faculties for insuring her own and her husband's happiness ; but such a woman is as rare as happiness itself ; now, if your wife is not a woman of this kind, you should endeavor to keep her, for your mutual peace, in the region of ideas in which she was reared, for you should remember that a moment of pride might spoil everything by placing the erstwhile slave in a position where she might endeavor to take advantage of her power.

After all, by following the system prescribed in this Medi-

tation, a superior man will only have to be commonplace when he wishes to be understood by his wife, if he has committed the folly of marrying one of the silly kind, instead of a young girl whose heart and intellect have been thoroughly tested.

We do not wish to imply by this last matrimonial observation that all "superior men" are to look for "superior women," and we would not care to have everyone explain our principles after the manner of Madame de Staël, who endeavored, in a coarse manner, to bring about an union between herself and Napoleon. Those two people would have been most wretched together; and Joséphine was a far more accomplished wife than that nineteenth century virago.

In fact, when we praise those *filles introuvables*, so well brought up by chance, so adapted by Nature to stand the rough contact of the great soul of what we term a *man*, we have in mind those rare and noble beings the model of which Goethe gave us in Claire of *Count Egmont*: we have in mind those women who seek no other glory than to play their parts well, adapting themselves with surprising suppleness to the whims and pleasures of those whom Nature has set over them; rising to the vast spheres of their thought, or lowering themselves to the simple task of amusing them like children; understanding full well the strange fancies of those tormented souls, their slightest words and their vaguest looks; happy alike at their husband's silence or diffusion; lastly, divining that the pleasures, ideas and morals of a Lord Byron cannot be those of a tradesman. But we had better stop, for this would take us too far from our subject; we are dealing with marriage, not love.

MEDITATION XII

HYGIENE OF MARRIAGE

THE aim of this Meditation is to show you a new method of defense by which you will be able to annihilate the will of your wife. We wish to speak of the reaction produced on the mind by physical vicissitudes and the scientific degradations of a skillfully planned diet.

This great and philosophical question of conjugal medicine will no doubt be to the liking of all the gouty, impotent and catarrhal men and legions of old gentlemen whose apathy was aroused by the article on predestinated husbands; but it will concern principally those bold enough to follow in the footsteps of the great French king, who attempted to assure the welfare of the nation at the expense of a few feudal heads. Here, it is the same question. It is always the amputation or weakening of a few members for the greater happiness of the mass.

Do you seriously entertain the belief that a bachelor subjected to a régime consisting of cucumbers, purslane and the application of leeches, as recommended by Sterne, would be very apt to endanger your wife's honor? Supposing a diplomat had had the idea of putting a permanent flaxseed poultice on Napoleon's head or giving him a honey enema every morning, do you think that Napoleon, the Great Napoleon, would have conquered Italy? Was, or was not, Napoleon a prey to the horrible suffering of dysuria during the Russian campaign? . . . This is one of those questions the solution of which has weighed on the whole world. Is it not a certainty that baths, douches and cooling agencies produce great changes in the more or less acute affections of the brain? In the broiling heat of July, when each one of your pores returns to the scorching atmosphere every drop of the cooling drinks you have so hastily absorbed, have you ever felt that wonderful energy, that power of thought which rendered life so bright and happy a few months before?

No, no, the iron imbedded in the hardest stone will always lift and disjoint the most durable monument on account of the secret influence exerted by the slow, invisible, hot and cold degradations that torment the atmosphere. Therefore, we should recognize that if atmospherical conditions can influence a man, the latter could naturally influence the minds of his fellow-men, by the more or less vigor and power with which he projects his *will*, and which produces a real atmosphere about him.

In this lies the principle of the actor's talent, that of poetry and fanaticism, for the one is the eloquence of speech as the other is the eloquence of action; in fact, herein lies the principle of a science which is at its dawn.

That *will*, so powerful from man to man, that nervous and fluid force, eminently mobile and transmissible, is subjected to the changing state of our organization, and a great many circumstances are apt to make that frail organism vary. Here our metaphysical observation will stop, and we shall go back to the analysis of the circumstances which elaborate man's will and carry it to the highest degree of strength or weakness.

Now, do not believe that our aim is to have you put poultices on your wife's honor or to shut her up in an oven or seal her like a letter; no. We shall not even give you the magnetic system by which you could make *your* will the master of *your wife's* will: there is not one husband who would accept the happiness of an eternal love at the price of that continual tension of the animal forces; but we are trying to develop a formidable hygienic system by which you will be able to put out the fire when it has once started in your house.

In fact, there exist, among the habits of the ultra-fashionable women in Paris and in the departments (the *ultra-fashionables* form a very distinguished class among the nice women), sufficient resources to attain our aim, without bringing in the arsenal of medicine, the four refrigerant seeds, the pond-lily and the thousand inventions worthy of witchcraft. We will even leave the *hanea* herb to Elien and the

purslaine to Sterne, because they announce altogether too evident antiphlogistic tendencies.

You must encourage your wife to lie down and remain entire days on soft couches where the body sinks into the downy feathers as if in a bath.

You must favor, by all the means which do not conflict with your conscience, the propensity of women to breathe the perfumed air of a closely curtained room, where the light filters through the softest of draperies.

You will obtain marvelous results from this system, after having at first experienced the discomfort of her excitement; if you are strong enough to withstand that momentary tension, you will soon see her factitious vigor wane. As a general thing, women like to live rapidly, but, after their tempests of sensation, come periods of calm that are very reassuring for their husbands.

Will not Jean-Jacques, through the divine organ of Julie, prove to your wife that she will be far more charming if she does not dishonor her delicate stomach and her lovely mouth by digesting ignoble pieces of beef and enormous hunks of mutton? Is there anything purer in the world than those interesting vegetables, always fresh and odorless, those multi-colored fruits, that coffee and fragrant chocolate, those oranges, golden apples, Arabian dates, Brussels *biscottes*, all of which form a healthful and graceful diet that produces satisfactory results, while, at the same time, imparting a strange originality to your wife? Her régime procures her a certain notoriety in her set, which sometimes is achieved by a costume, a fine action, or a witty speech. Pythagoras must be her passion, as if Pythagoras were a dog or a monkey.

Never commit the imprudence of the men who, in order to give themselves a varnish of strong-mindedness, combat this feminine belief: *that to eat little helps one to keep slender*. Your position of husband compels you to always think your wife too red in the face; you should even try to make the blood rush to her head, so as to have the right of introducing, at certain times, an army of leeches into your home.

Your wife should drink water only slightly colored with an agreeable Burgundy devoid of tonic properties; any other wine would be injurious.

Never allow her to drink pure water, for then you would be lost.

“Impetuous fluid! When you press upward against the brain-cells, see how they yield to your power! *Curiosity* comes swimming along, beckoning to her followers to join her: they plunge into the middle of the stream. *Imagination* dreamily takes a seat on the river-bank. She watches the torrent, and changes the straws and reeds into towering masts. Hardly has the metamorphosis taken place, before *Desire*, with one hand clutching her dress, arrives on the scene, and takes possession of them. O! ye drinkers of water, is it by the aid of that enchanting spring that you have so many times turned the world about, ruthlessly casting aside the weakling, burying his face in the dust, and sometimes even changing the form and aspect of Nature.”

If this system of inaction, joined to the dietary régime we have described, does not give satisfactory results, throw yourself body and soul into another system which we are about to develop.

Man has a given sum of energy. Some man or some woman is what ten is to thirty, or five to one, and there is a certain degree that no one oversteps. The quantity of will power or energy that we all possess spreads like sound; it is modified according to the octaves which it is allowed to wander over. That force is unique, and although it resolves into desires, passions, intellectual labor or bodily exercise, it goes wherever man wishes to direct it. A pugilist spends it in boxing, a baker in kneading his bread, a poet in intellectual excitement, which absorbs and demands vast quantities, a dancer makes it pass into his feet; in a word, everybody distributes it as he thinks best, and that I may see the Minotaur sitting calmly by my bedside to-night, if you do not know, as well as I, where most of it goes. Nearly all men consume in necessary labors or in the anguish of harmful passions, that fine sum of energy and will-power which Nature has given them; but all our nice women fall

a prey to the whims and struggles of that power, which cannot find an outlet. If the energy of your wife persists after the diet you submit her to, you should throw her into a mad and never-ceasing whirl. Try and find the means of using up the energy which is burdensome to you, by completely absorbing her in some occupation. Without making a dray-horse of a woman, there are a thousand ways of tiring her with constant occupation.

While leaving the means of execution to you, for they change according to circumstances, we will indicate dancing as one of the finest means of annihilating love. As this subject has found an able exponent in a contemporary, we shall let him speak.

“The poor victim admired by an enthusiastic circle often pays dearly for her triumphs. What can be expected of efforts which are so little proportioned to the strength of the fair sex? The muscles taxed to their utmost, consume without moderation. The spirits, destined to nourish the passions and the brain, are turned from their natural course. The absence of desires, the craving for quiet, the exclusive choice of substantial foods, all indicate an impoverished system more bent on repairing waste than on deriving pleasure. An *habitué* of the theaters once said to me: ‘Whoever has lived among dancers has lived on mutton; for their exhausted faculties crave this strong nourishment.’ Believe me, the love that a dancer inspires is very deceiving: beneath an alluring surface, you meet a cold and niggardly temperament and non-combustible senses. Calabrian physicians prescribe dancing as the remedy for the hysterical passions which are so common among the women of their country, and the Arabs make use of the same recipe for the noble mares whose too lascivious temperament prevents fertility. ‘As stupid as a dancer’ is a proverb which is well-known among theatrical people. Lastly, the wisest heads in Europe are convinced that dancing contains a refrigerating element of the most powerful kind.

“As a proof of this, it is necessary to add other observations. The life of the shepherds led to inordinate erotic passions. The morals of female weavers bore a very evil

reputation among the Greeks. The Italians have composed a proverb on the lewdness of the lame. The Spaniards who, through so many sources, received the African incontinence, embody the secret of their desires in this maxim which is of frequent use: *Muger y gallina pierna quebrantada* (it is good that a woman and a fowl should have a broken leg). The Oriental depth in the art of voluptuousness is revealed in its entirety in this edict of Kaliph Hakim, founder of the Druses, who forbade under death penalty the manufacture of woman's shoes in his dominions. It would seem as if the heart passions of the whole world were only waiting for the legs to remain quiet in order to break out."

What a wonderful maneuver it is to make a woman dance and to feed her on white meat!

Do not think that these observations, which are as true as they are witty, contradict our preceding system; by this, as well as by the other one, you will be able to produce in a woman that much desired apathy, pledge of security. With the last system you leave an avenue of escape open to the foe; with the first one, you annihilate him.

At this juncture, we imagine we hear narrow-minded people denouncing our system in the name of morality and sentiment.

Does not woman possess a soul? Has she not sensations, the same as we? By what right, ignoring her ideas, needs and sorrows, do we shape her like vile metal? Is it because these beings are already weak and wretched, that a brute assumes the power of tormenting them exclusively for the benefit of his more or less just ideas? Supposing, that, through your system, which is either heating or debilitating, and which softens and stretches the fibers, you should cause terrible and cruel diseases, bring a cherished wife to an untimely end; etc., etc.

This is our answer:

Have you ever noticed the manifold shapes that Harlequin and Pierrot give their little white hats? They turn them inside out so deftly that they assume the form of a top, a boat, a glass, a half-moon, a basket, a fish. a whip, a dagger, a man's head, etc.

An exact image of the despotism with which you will have to manage your wife.

A wife is property which one acquires through a contract, she is personal, for possession equals a title; in a word, woman is, properly speaking, only an annex of man; now, crush her, diminish her as much as you like, she still is yours to do with what you will. Pay no attention to her protests, her wails and her sorrows; Nature has built her for our pleasure and to carry all the burdens: the children, worries, blows and treachery of man.

Do not accuse me of being hard. In all the codes of so-called civilized nations, man has written out woman's fate in these two brutal words: *Vae victis!* Woe to the weak!

Finally, think of this last observation, perhaps the most important one of all those we have made up to the present time: if you, her husband, do not break the slender reed by your severity, it will be done by some tyrannical and whimsical bachelor, and it will be far worse, for she will then have to bear two afflictions instead of one. Everything considered, humaneness should prompt you to follow the rules of our hygiene.

MEDITATION XIII

CONCERNING PERSONAL MEANS

It may be that the preceding Meditations have developed general lines of conduct, more than they have shown the means to repel strength by strength. They are pharmacopœias and not topical remedies. Now, here are the personal means that Nature has given you to defend yourself; for no one has been overlooked by Providence; if she has given to the sepia (a fish of the Adriatic) that dark color which helps it to produce a cloud under cover of which it can escape from its enemy, you may know that she has not left husbands defenseless: now is the time for you to take advantage of her gifts.

When you married, you insisted that your wife should

nurse her children: therefore, you should subject her to the inconvenience of pregnancy and nursing, which should ward off the danger for a year or two. A woman who is occupied in bringing a child into the world and nursing it, has no time to think of a lover, besides being quite unpresentable for quite a while before and after its birth. Indeed, how could the most immodest of the refined women with whom this book deals, be bold enough to walk abroad when she is *enceinte*, and reveal her hidden fruit, her public accuser? O! shades of Lord Byron, who hated to gaze upon eating women!

Six months after her confinement, a woman just begins to enjoy her recovered freedom and good looks.

If your wife has not nursed her first-born, you are too clever not to make her wish to suckle her second child; you read Jean-Jacques's *Émile* aloud to her, you inflame her imagination by the recital of a mother's duties, you exalt her moral nature, etc.; in a word, you act either like a fool or a sensible man; and if you act like the former, you surely will be minotaurized, even after reading this work: but if you act like the latter, you should comprehend a hint.

The first way is virtually personal to you. It will give you plenty of time to put the other means into execution.

Since Alcibiades cut the ears and tail of his dog to do a good turn to Pericles, who was very much upset by the prospect of having a sort of Spanish war on his hands and being loaded down with Ouvrard supplies, in which the Athenians at the time were interested, there has never been a minister who has not endeavored to cut some dog's tail off.

Finally, in medicine, when an inflammation declares itself on some important part of the human body, the physicians cause a counter-inflammation on another part, with moxas, scarifications and acupunctures.

Therefore, another means consists in putting a moxa on your wife or in driving a needle into her brain which will turn her thoughts in another direction more favorable to you.

A clever man once made his honeymoon last almost four

years ; but finally it began to wane and he perceived the fatal crescent. His wife was just in the frame of mind in which we pictured every nice woman in the first part of this work : she had become infatuated with a good-for-nothing individual, who was ugly and diminutive ; but he was not her husband. In this predicament, the latter thought out something which gave a new lease of life to his tottering happiness. His wife had acted with such discretion that it would have been very hard for him to request her lover to remain away from his home, for his spouse had discovered a distant relationship between herself and her admirer. The danger was becoming graver every day. The Minotaur could be scented in the vicinity. One evening, the husband appeared to be very gloomy and depressed. His wife had arrived at the point where she was more affectionate with him than during their honeymoon ; and she naturally questioned him closely. He remained in the same mood. Her inquiries became more pressing and he let fall a word here and there which implied that something terrible had occurred. There he applied a Japanese moxa that burned like a bonfire of 1600. The wife employed all the wiles she knew to find out whether her husband's sorrow was caused by the prospective lover ; first intrigue, in which she used all sorts of tactics. Her imagination was awakened. She thought no more of her lover. Did she not have to find out what was troubling her husband ? One evening, the latter, spurred by the desire to tell all to his cherished mate, announces that their whole fortune is lost. They will have to retrench, to give up their horses, their box at the Bouffes, their balls, their receptions, society ; perhaps, by living in the country for a year or two, they may be able to save a portion of their wealth ! Addressing himself to his wife's imagination, he pitied her for having become the help-meet of a man who was desperately in love with her, but who had become penniless ; he tore his hair a little and his wife was compelled to sympathize with him for decency's sake ; then, in the first excitement created by conjugal loyalty, he bundled her off to his country-seat. There he used new scarifications, poultices and other remedies ; he had a medieval annex added

to their mansion, and madame had the grounds changed so as to have fountains, lakes, waterfalls, etc.; but her husband, in the midst of these manifold duties, did not neglect his own: he read to his wife, pampered her and paid her all sorts of delicate attentions. You must note that he never told her of his scheme, and if their fortune was rebuilt, it was no doubt because of the large sums expended on the remodeling of the place; he proved to his wife that the lake created a waterfall on which he had had windmills erected, etc.

It was a carefully carried-out scheme, for the husband forgot none of his duties, nor did he neglect to invite a number of bores so that his wife could not complain of lack of distraction. Then, when they returned to town to spend the winter, he flung her into such a whirl of social activity that she had no time for lovers, who are the result of an idle life.

Trips to Italy, Switzerland, Greece, and sudden ailments, that require the sufferer to depart for some distant resort, are rather good moxas. At any rate, a clever man should be able to devise any number of them.

Let us continue the enumeration of personal means.

Here, we wish you to note that we are arguing from an hypothesis without which you would drop the book, namely: that your honeymoon lasted a reasonable time and that the girl you made your wife was unsullied; in the contrary case, your wife has only married you with the plan to deceive you.

At the time when the struggle between virtue and inconsistency begins in your household, the whole question lies in a constant parallel which your wife unconsciously draws between you and her lover.

Here, you have another means of defense, an entirely personal one, and one which is rarely used by husbands, but which superior men are not afraid to attempt. This method consists in being more fascinating than the lover, without your wife suspecting your design. You should make her admit to herself some night, when she is putting her hair in curl-papers: "Why, my husband is really much nicer."

To succeed, you should, as you have the advantage over the lover of knowing the character of the lady concerned, and the weapons which will wound her most, you should, I say, with all the cunning of a diplomat, make that lover commit a number of *faux-pas* and render him obnoxious to his love, unknown to himself.

In the first place, he will, in the usual way, try to make friends with you, or you may have mutual friends; so, either by means of these friends or by sly insinuations, you must deceive him on essential points; and, with a little ingeniousness, you will have the pleasure of seeing your wife turn from her lover without either of them ever guessing the reason. You will have created in your own home a comedy in five acts, in which you fill the brilliant rôle of Figaro or Almaviva; and for a few months you will be able to enjoy yourself, especially as your vanity, your self-love and your interest are involved.

When I was young, I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of an old emigrant who liked me right well, and who gave me the rudiments of an education that young men generally receive from women. This friend, whose memory will always be dear to me, taught me by his example, to put into use those diplomatic stratagems which require in their accomplishment as much cunning as grace.

The Comte de Nocé had returned from Coblenz at a time where there was a certain danger for noblemen to remain in France. No man ever displayed more courage and kindness, more cunning and recklessness. Although sixty years of age, he had just married a girl of twenty-five through a charitable impulse, which blinded him to the folly of his act: he rescued the poor thing from the despotism of a whimsical mother. "Would you care to be my widow?" asked the amiable old man of Mademoiselle de Pontivy; but he was of a too loving disposition not to attach himself more than was good for him to his wife. During his youth, he had been under the tutelage of several of the wittiest women of the Court of Louis XV., so he did not despair of keeping his wife free from entanglements. What man have I ever seen apply with greater skill the principles which I

have endeavored to give husbands! What fascination he gave to life by his charming manners and witty conversation! His wife never learned until after his death, and then only through me, that he had been a sufferer from gout. His lips distilled friendliness as his eyes bespoke love. He had prudently taken up his residence in a valley and God knows the walks that he took with his wife! . . . His lucky star had endowed Mademoiselle de Pontivy with a kind heart and caused her to possess an exquisite delicacy of sentiment, a delightful modesty, which are characteristics that I believe would tend to adorn the ugliest woman in the world. Presently, one of his nephews, a dashing soldier who had emerged unscathed from the Moscow disasters, returned home to his uncle, actuated as much by the desire to see whether there was any danger of cousins, as by the hope to win the aunt. His dark hair, his mustache, his soldierly bearing, a certain *disinvoltura* which was as charming as it was natural, everything, formed a contrast between the uncle and the nephew. I arrived on the scene just as the youthful Countess was showing her new relative how to play *tric-trac*; the proverb says that women only learn this game from their lovers, and vice versa. Now, that very morning, during a *séance*, the Comte de Nocé had caught a glance of mingled desire, fear and innocence passing between the young couple. That evening, he proposed a hunting-party, which was accepted. I never had seen him look as well as he did the next morning, in spite of a premonitory twinge of gout. The Devil himself could not have brought up the subject of women with more *à propos* than he. He had been a former *mousquetaire* and had known Sophie Arnoult. That sums up everything. Our conversation soon became wonderfully broad: may the Lord forgive me!

"I never thought that my uncle was such a gay blade," the nephew remarked.

We made a halt and while we were reclining most comfortably on one of the greenest spots in the forest, we discoursed upon women with more *à propos* than Brantôme and Aloysia.

"You are very happy under the present government, you

young people! Women nowadays have morals!" (In order to appreciate the old gentleman's exclamation, it would be necessary to know the horrors that the captain had related); "And," resumed the Count, "it is one of the benefits accruing from the Revolution. This system gives the passions much more mystery and charm. Years ago, women's morals were light; why, you cannot imagine how much life and wit were required to interest those worn-out temperaments: we were always on the *qui-vive*. But then, a man had a fine chance of becoming famous for a clever audacity, or a broad speech delivered with wit. Women like that sort of thing, and it is the surest way of winning them!"

He uttered the last sentence with a fine show of anger. He paused and toyed with his gun, as if to hide a deep emotion.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, "my day is over! A man needs a youthful imagination . . . and a young body! . . . Ah! why did I marry? The worst of it is that girls reared by mothers who lived in that wonderful period of gallantry pretend to be so candid and easily shocked. . . . It would seem as if honey were not pure enough for their lips, when people who know them are well aware of the fact that they would not hesitate to swallow salt pills!"

He rose, and grasping his gun, brought it down with a gesture of rage upon the ground.

"It looks as if my aunt were fond of gay stories," whispered the officer to me.

"Or rapid *dénouements*," quoth I.

The young man fingered his collar, straightened his tie and gamboled about like a Calabrian goat. We returned at about two o'clock in the afternoon. The Count bore me off to his rooms under the pretext of showing me some medals which he had spoken about during our return to the château. The dinner was gloomy. The Countess treated her nephew with distant courtesy. When we left the table to pass into the drawing-room, the Count said to his wife:

"Are you going to play *tric-trac*? We will leave you."

The young Countess made no reply. She was looking at the fire and appeared not to have heard her husband's re-

mark. He took a few steps toward the door and beckoned to me to follow him. At the sound of his retreating footsteps, his wife turned her head abruptly.

"Why do you want to leave us?" she said; "you have all of to-morrow to show the medals to monsieur."

The Count remained. Without paying the slightest attention to the imperceptible embarrassment which had taken the place of the military grace of his nephew, he displayed during the whole evening the inexpressible charm of his conversational powers. I never saw him more brilliant or more affectionate. We spoke a great deal of women. The jests of our host were of the most delicate kind imaginable. It was even hard for me to realize that his hair was white, for he shone with that youth of heart and mind which makes the hoariness of old age melt like snow before the sun. The nephew departed the very next day. Even after Monsieur de Nocé's death, when I tried to take advantage of those intimate chats when a woman is not always on her guard, I never could learn what breach the Viscount had committed. It must have been a very serious one, for, since that time, Madame de Nocé has refused to meet her nephew and cannot even now hear his name without frowning. For some time I never guessed the Count's aim in asking us to hunt with him; but, later, I thought that he had risked a very high stake.

However, if you succeed in scoring such a victory as Monsieur de Nocé's, never forget to always apply the moxa system: and do not lure yourself with the belief that you will always be able to accomplish such things. By thus lavishing your talents, you would end by discrediting yourself in your wife's eyes, for she would exact so much from you that a time would come when you could not comply with her demands. The human soul is subjected, relative to its desires, to a sort of progression, the aim and origin of which are equally unknown. In the same way that the opium fiend is compelled to double his doses in order to obtain the desired result, our mind, which is both imperious and weak, demands that ideas, sentiments and things should forever be on the increase. Thence has sprung the necessity of skill-

fully distributing the interest of all dramatic works, and graduating the doses in medical practice. Therefore, should you ever attempt these means, you would have to subordinate your bold conduct to a great many circumstances, and the success will always depend upon the resources which you have employed.

Lastly, have you influence and powerful friends? Do you fill an important position? The way we are about to indicate, will kill the evil in the bud. Have you not the power to suppress the lover by promoting him, by a change of residence or by a permutation, if he is in the army? You suppress the correspondence, and later, we shall furnish you the means of doing so; now, *sublatâ causâ, tollitur effectus*, which is Latin for "no effect without a cause"; *pas d'argent, pas de Suisses*.

Nevertheless, you feel that your wife could easily choose another lover; but, after these preliminary means, you should always have some moxa in readiness in order to gain time and pull yourself out of the scrape by a new machination.

You should know how to combine the moxa system with the deceptions of Carlin. The immortal Carlin, of the Comédie-Italienne, could keep a whole audience amused for hours by repeating, with all the different intonations of a thousand voices: "The king says to the queen.—The queen says to the king." Imitate Carlin. Find the means of checkmating your wife, so that she will not checkmate you. Take your degree in the art of promising, by imitating the ministers of State. Become accustomed to showing, when most *à propos*, the "Jack-in-the-box" dear to childhood. We are all children, and women are mightily inclined to lose their time by running after will-o'-the-wisps. Brilliant and too elusive flame, is not *imagination* there, to lend you a helping hand?

Finally, make a study of the art of being, and of not being, with your wife, of seizing the times when you have a chance of impressing her with your wisdom, without boring her with your superiority and your personality. If the ignorance in which you have kept her has not entirely de-

stroyed whatever mentality she may have had, you will be clever enough to arrange it so that each of you will desire the other for some time to come.

MEDITATION XIV

CONCERNING APARTMENTS

THE systems and means which have gone before are, in a way, purely moral. They participate in the nobility of our souls and are in no wise obnoxious: but now we shall consider some precautions *à la* Bartholo. Do not weaken. There is a marital bravery, just as there is a martial and a civil bravery, a *garde national* courage.

What is the first thing a little girl does after having purchased a parrot? Does she not put it in a fine cage whence it cannot possibly escape?

That child should be a lesson to you.

Everything that concerns your house and its chambers must be planned with the idea of leaving your wife no resource whatever in case she has decided to leave *you* to the mercy of the Minotaur.

Half of the misfortunes occur solely because of the abominable facilities which houses offer.

First of all, you should remember to have as *concierge* a single man entirely devoted to your interests. It is a treasure which is easily found; who is the man who has not some faithful old body-servant or some foster-father?

A fierce hatred should exist between your wife and this Nestor, the guardian of your castle. Your front-door is the alpha and the omega of an intrigue. Do not all intrigues of the kind reduce themselves to this: to enter and to escape?

Your house would be of no earthly use unless it were situated *entre cour et jardin*, and so built that it stood free from the surrounding houses.

First, you should suppress all cavities in your reception-rooms. A closet, if it only contains a dozen jars of jam,

should be walled up. You are preparing for war, and a general's first thought is to cut off his enemies' supplies. Therefore, all the walls should be filled in order to present a plain surface to the eye, where any foreign object would be easily discernible.

Consult the remains of ancient monuments and you will see that the beauty of the Greek and Roman apartments consisted principally in purity of lines, smoothness of walls and scarcity of furniture. The Greeks would have smiled with pity had they seen the gaping expanses of the closets in our salons.

This magnificent system of defense should find a special application in your wife's apartments; never allow her to drape her bed so that a body could walk around it and be lost in a maze of curtains; be pitiless regarding entrances, and locate her apartments at the very end of the reception-rooms, and do not suffer them to have an opening on any other chamber save the salon, so that you can see at a glance all who come and go.

Le Mariage de Figaro has no doubt taught you the advantage of placing her room at a great distance from the ground. All bachelors are *Chérubins*.

Because of your fortune, your wife has a right to a dressing-room, a bathroom and a maid's room; therefore, think of Suzanne, and never allow her little room to be underneath that of her mistress. Have it located above madame's apartment and do not be afraid to disfigure your house with a hideous variety of windows.

If luck has it that this dangerous apartment communicates with your wife's rooms by means of a secret staircase, consult your architect lengthily; let his genius exhaust itself in rendering this staircase as innocent as a miller's; let not these sinister stairs have any perfidious cavities; let not their straight and angular steps have any of the voluptuous curves which were so appreciated by Faublas and Justine while they waited for the Marquis de B—— to go out. Nowadays, architects construct stairs that are preferable to divans. We should aim to re-establish the virtuous corkscrew stairs of our ancestors.

Concerning the fireplace of madame's apartment, you should have a care to place an iron grating five feet above the hood, even if it has to be sealed anew at each sweeping. If your wife ridicules this precaution, you should bring up the many murders that have been committed by means of fireplaces. Almost all women are in mortal dread of burglars.

The bed is one of those decisive pieces of furniture whose structure must be carefully planned. In this case, everything is of the greatest importance. Here are the results of a long experience. Let this piece of furniture be of a shape original enough to withstand the frequent changes of fashion which destroy the best efforts of our decorators, for it is very important that your wife be not allowed to change at will the setting, so to speak, of conjugal pleasure. The base of the bed should be massive and low, so as not to allow any space between itself and the floor. And never forget that Byron's Doña Julia hid Don Juan under her pillow. But it would be ridiculous to treat such a delicate subject with lightness.

LXII

In marriage, the bed is everything.

Therefore, we will not delay considering this admirable creation of human genius, an invention which should rank higher in our gratitude than steamships, carriages, firearms, locomotives, barrels and bottles. In the first place, the bed is affiliated with all of these, if one will but give the matter a little thought. But, when one reflects that it is our second father, so to speak, and that the quietest and most turbulent parts of our lives are spent there, under its protecting crown, words fail to do it justice. (See Meditation XVII, entitled, "Theory of the Bed.")

When *war*, of which we shall discourse later on, declares itself between you and madame, you will always have some ingenious pretext to look into her closets and bureaus; for, if your wife should take into her head to steal a statue, it would be for you to find its hiding-place. A *gynecium* built

according to this system will allow you to see at a glance whether or not it contains two pounds more of silk than it usually does. But let only *one* closet be put in, and you will be lost! During the honeymoon, you should accustom your wife to great neatness in her apartments; do not suffer anything to be out of place. If you do not train her to be scrupulously neat, she will soon surround herself with such litter that it will be impossible for you to tell whether or not there are two extra pounds of silk in your rooms.

The window-curtains should always be of the sheerest materials and in the evening you must form the habit of walking up and down so that madame will never be surprised to see you stroll up to the window out of sheer absent-mindedness. Lastly, to close the chapter on windows, you should always have them built in such a way that the sills would never be wide enough to hold a bag of flour.

Once your wife's apartments are arranged according to these principles, your house might contain enough niches to harbor all the saints of Paradise, and still you would be safe. Every night, with the help of your friend the *concierge*, you will be able to balance the entrances by the exits; and in order to obtain sure results, nothing prevents you from having him keep a double set of books of daily visitors.

If you have a garden, you should cultivate a fondness for dogs. By letting one of these incorruptible guardians roam around the premises, you will keep the Minotaur at a respectful distance, especially if you accustom your four-footed friend to accept his food only from the hands of the janitor, as some unscrupulous bachelors might try to poison him.

All these precautions should be taken naturally, so as not to awaken suspicion. If some men have been imprudent enough to marry without taking these scientific precautions, they should, at the earliest possible moment, sell their house and purchase another one, or have it repaired and remodeled.

You should absolutely banish from your apartments all sofas, divans, *chaises-longues*, etc. Not only are these pieces

of furniture only considered fit to adorn a grocer's home, and are to be found everywhere nowadays, but they are essentially means of perdition; I have never been able to look upon them without alarm, and I have always thought that I could see the Devil with his horns and his cloven foot.

After all, nothing is as dangerous as a chair, and it is really a great pity that women cannot be confined between four walls! . . . Where is the husband who, on sinking into a disjointed chair, does not believe that it may have received the instruction of the *Sofa* of Crébillon junior? But we have fortunately arranged your apartments according to a system of prevention, so that nothing fatal can happen within them, unless your own negligence gives rise to an opportunity.

A fault which you should contract (and never get rid of) is a sort of absent-minded curiosity which should lead you to examine every box and bureau you see. You should proceed gracefully in this inspection and each time you should seek to arouse your wife's mirth in order to be forgiven.

You should never fail to manifest the greatest astonishment at any new piece of furniture introduced into your home. Make your wife explain its use at once and then proceed to torture yourself trying to make out whether it has not some secret *raison d'être*, and whether it does not contain some perfidious hiding-places.

Nor is this all. You are too clever not to know that your pretty paroquet will not remain in her cage unless it is as dainty as it should be. So the smallest details should be elegant and tasteful. The *ensemble* should offer a simple and charming appearance. The draperies and curtains must be renewed often. The pristine freshness of the setting is too important to be overlooked. It represents the daily chick-weed that children put in their pets' cages to lure them with the belief that it is the country. Such an apartment is the *ultima ratio* of husbands; a woman has no fault to find when everything has been done for her gratification.

Husbands who are compelled to live in apartment houses are in the worst position of all.

What a beneficial or nefarious influence a janitor can exert over their destinies!

Isn't there a house on either side of the one they occupy? True, that by placing their wives' apartments on one side, the danger will be reduced by half; but, will they not be obliged to study the age, social standing, fortune, character and habits of the next-door tenants, and even know their friends and relatives?

A wise husband will never occupy a ground-floor apartment.

Any man can apply to an apartment the precautions which we have outlined for a house. Besides, a tenant has this advantage over an owner, that an apartment is less spacious than a house and may therefore be more easily watched.

MEDITATION XV

CONCERNING CONJUGAL CUSTOM-HOUSE METHODS

"Eh! no, madame, no."

"For monsieur, it would be a most unseemly thing."

"Do you think for a moment, madame, that we advocate searching the persons who cross your threshold or leave it furtively, so as to find out whether they are bringing you some dutiable jewel? Ah! that would hardly be proper; but our proceedings, madame, will not be odious in the least, so do not alarm yourself."

Monsieur, a conjugal custom-house is, of all the schemes of this second part, the one that will perhaps require the most tact, delicacy and knowledge acquired *à priori*, that is, before marriage. In order to *exercise*, a husband must have made a deep study of Lavater's book and have absorbed all his principles. He must needs have trained his eye and his mind to judge and grasp, with surprising rapidity, the slightest physical indications by which a man discloses his thoughts.

Lavater's *Physiognomy* has created a genuine science. It has at last taken its place among human acquirements.

If, when it was first published, it was received doubtfully and with smiles of derision, since then the famous Dr. Gall, through his fine theory of the human skull, has completed the scientist's system and given a solid basis to his luminous and clever observations. Intellectual people, diplomats, women, all those who are the disciples of these two celebrated men, have often had opportunity to note a great many evident signs by which human thought may be recognized. Bodily habits, manners, chirography, voice, have more than once enlightened a loving woman, a cunning diplomat, a wise administrator or a sovereign, compelled, each one, to distinguish at a glance, love, treason or unrecognized worth. The man whose soul acts forcibly is like a poor glow-worm which, unconsciously, gives out sparks of light from all its pores. He moves in a luminous sphere in which every effort calls forth a glow and outlines his movements by long, fiery tracks.

Here are all the elements of the knowledge you are required to possess, for conjugal custom-house methods consist solely in the rapid but thorough examination of the moral and physical state of all those who come and go in your house and are liable to meet your wife. Then, a husband resembles one of those spiders which, seated in the middle of their webs, get a shock every time they spy a foolish fly, and who from afar listen, judge and keep an eye on the prey and the foe.

Thus, you are procuring yourself the means of examining each bachelor who craves admittance to your fireside, in two very distinct positions: when he is *about* to enter, and when he *has* entered.

When *about* to enter, he says a good many things without opening his lips!

Whether by patting his hair lightly so that he changes its characteristic appearance;

Whether by humming some French or Italian air, light or sad, in a tenor, contralto, soprano or baritone voice;

Whether by fingering his tie to see whether it is in its right position;

Whether by smoothing the neat or ruffled jabot of an evening or a dress shirt;

Whether by trying to find out whether his blonde or dark, straight or curly wig is in its right place;

Whether by stroking with a well-cared for, or a neglected hand, neatly or badly gloved, his mustache or his whiskers, or passing a fine comb through them;

Whether by slow and repeated movements to place his chin in the very center of his cravat;

Whether by standing first on one foot and then on the other with his hands thrust in his pockets;

Whether by toying with his boots, as if to say: "Ah! my feet are rather nice!"

Whether by arriving in a carriage or on foot and by wiping off the stains on his shoes or by letting them remain;

Whether by remaining as motionless as a smoking Dutchman;

Whether by remaining in front of the door in the attitude of a soul out of Purgatory waiting for Peter and his keys;

Whether by hesitating to ring the bell or by grasping it lightly, quickly, familiarly or like a man sure of his welcome;

Whether by ringing timidly so that the sound loses itself in the silence of the house like the first peal of convent bells; or by the fact that after having rung masterfully, he rings again, impatient at not hearing the hasty footsteps of a flunkey;

Whether by perfuming his breath with the help of pastilles;

Whether by taking a pinch of tobacco with an affected air and carefully brushing away the stray grains so as not to soil his linen;

Whether by looking all around, as if he were appraising the value of everything, from the bannisters to the carpet, like a furniture dealer or a builder;

Whether he be young or old, cold or fiery, sprightly or sedate, cheerful or sad, etc.

You feel that, ascending your stairs, is a human mass of observations.

The outlines that we have striven to give this figure, show a real moral kaleidoscope with its thousands of changes. We have not even permitted a woman's presence on the tell-tale threshold, for our remarks, which are already lengthy, would have to become as numerous and light as the sands of the sea.

In truth, a man feels strangely alone when he is standing before a front-door; and if he is compelled to wait a little before it is opened unto him, he indulges in a little silent monologue, a weird soliloquy in which everything, even his step reveals his desires, intentions, qualities, faults, secrets, virtues, etc. In a word, a man at a front-door is like a girl of fifteen in a confessional the day before her first communion.

Would you like the proof of this? Observe the change that comes over the face and manners of that bachelor as soon as he gets into the house. The scene-shifter of the Opera, the temperature, the clouds and the sun do not alter as quickly the setting of a play, of the atmosphere or of the sky.

As soon as he crosses your threshold, not a single one of the myriads of ideas which he revealed to you so artlessly on the stairs remains to give you some enlightenment on which to base your remarks. The social and conventional attitude and expression have swallowed up all individuality; but a clever husband should already have guessed the object of his call and be able to read his thoughts like an open book.

The manner in which he approaches your wife, looks at her, addresses her, takes his leave . . . herein you will find volumes of minute observations.

Everything, from the voice to the deportment, a smile, silence, his alacrity to please you, should be considered as an indication and should be studied without any effort on your part. You should hide the most annoying discovery under the ease and flowing conversation of a man of the world. As we are unable to present the thousand and one

details of the subject, we will have to rely on the reader's sagacity and he will not fail to perceive the vastness of the science; it begins with the analysis of every look and ends with the perception of the motions that annoyance, when trying to vent itself, communicates to a foot clad in satin or covered by a boot.

But the exit! . . . for you must foresee the possibility of missing the rigorous examination you should make at the threshold; therefore, the exit becomes most important, inasmuch as this new study must be made with the same elements, but directly in opposition with the first one.

However, in every exit there exists a peculiar situation; it is the time when the enemy has overcome all the intrenchments and finds himself in the street once more! . . . Now is the time for a clever man to judge a call! The indications are not as numerous, but they speak very clearly! It is the *dénouement*, and a man immediately discloses its gravity by the simplest expression of happiness, sorrow or joy.

Revelations then are easy to gather: they may assume the shape of a glance thrown on the house or on the windows of the apartment; a slow and loitering walk; the fool's open expression of delight, the sprightly gait of the cad or the involuntary halt of the man deeply moved; in a word, on the threshold, questions were as neatly put as if a provincial academy were offering a prize for an essay: at a man's exit, the solutions are clear and precise. Our task would be above human strength had we to enumerate the different ways by which men disclose their feelings; here tact and sentiment are the only factors to be counted on.

If you apply these principles of observation to strangers, there is all the more reason to apply them to your wife.

A married man should make a careful study of his wife's face; this is easy and is done unconsciously every moment of the day. The fair countenance should hold no mystery for him. He should know every passing expression and what mask is assumed to hide some sentiments.

The slightest twitching of the lips, the most imperceptible contraction of the nostrils, the almost invisible gradations of the eye, the changes of the voice and those undefinable

clouds that sometimes pass over a woman's countenance or those bright indications of joy should be as an open book to you.

The woman is there; everyone looks at her and still there is no one who can comprehend her thoughts. But for you, her eye is more or less brilliant, its pupil is large or contracted; her eyelids quivered, her eyebrows twitched; a frown, as rapidly effaced as a ripple on the sea, made its appearance on her forehead; her lips tightened, relaxed or became animated . . . for you, this woman has spoken.

If, in those arduous moments when a wife is dissembling in the presence of her husband, you have the soul of the Sphinx to read her, you feel keenly that the custom-house methods are child's play in regard to her.

When coming home or going out, or when she believes she is alone, your wife displays all the imprudence of a crow; it would not take much to make her speak her secret aloud to herself; therefore, by the slight contraction which comes over her features when she sees you, a contraction which cannot be effaced rapidly enough to hide the expression that the face wore before your intrusion, you should be able to read her soul. Lastly, your wife will often find herself on the *monologue* threshold and there a husband is always in a position to verify the sentiments of his better-half.

Is there any man so indifferent to the mysteries of love that he has not more than once admired the light and dainty step of a woman hastening to a *rendez-vous*? She glides through the crowd like a serpent in the grass. The shop-windows display their fascinating treasures in vain; she hastens on and on like the faithful animal following the invisible scent of its master, deaf to all compliments, blind to all glances, unmindful of the light touches that are unavoidable in the human circulation of Paris. Oh! how well she knows the price of a minute! Her walk, her costume, her face commit a thousand indiscretions. But oh! what a delightful page for the loiterer and what a tragic one for the husband is the countenance of that woman when she emerges from that secret spot constantly inhabited by her heart! . . . Her happiness can be seen even in the slight

imperfections of her *coiffure*, whose complicated construction and shining tresses have not been able to assume beneath the comb of the lover the precise and graceful appearance that the experienced hands of my lady's maid gave them. And what a charming abandon in her walk! How can we render the sentiment which imparts such glowing color to her complexion, which robs her eyes of their assurance and which is so closely related to sadness and joy, pride and modesty!

These signs, which have been taken from the Meditation on "The Last Symptoms," and are the outcome of a situation where a woman wishes to conceal everything, allow you to guess by analogy the fine harvest of observations which you still have to gather when your wife arrives home, and when, the crime having not as yet been committed, she artlessly reveals her secret thoughts. As for ourselves, we have never been able to gaze upon a threshold without having the longing to nail a weathercock and a wind-flower to it.

MEDITATION XVI

CONJUGAL CHART

I MUST admit that I know of only one house in Paris that has been built according to the system developed in the two preceding Meditations. But I should also acknowledge that I evolved the system according to the house. This admirable fortress belongs to a youthful Master of Requests, intoxicated with love and jealousy.

When he learned that there was a man solely occupied in improving marriage in France, he had the kindness to open his home to me and to show me its *gynecium*. I marveled at the wonderful genius which had so skillfully concealed every sort of precaution under the beauty of the furnishings. I admitted that it was impossible for his wife to consummate a deception in her apartments.

"Monsieur," said I to this State Council Othello, who did not seem to be very well posted concerning matrimonial

policy, "I have no doubt but that Madame la Vicomtesse experiences keen delight in living in this little paradise; she must enjoy much happiness, especially if you are with her a great deal; but a time will come when she will weary of it, for one grows tired of everything, sir, even of the sublime. What will you do, then, when Madame la Vicomtesse, tiring of your inventions, yawns and demands the free exercise of two rights indispensable to happiness: personal freedom, which means the faculty of going and coming at her *own free-will*, and the liberty of the press, or the faculty of writing and receiving her correspondence without fear of your censure?"

Hardly had I finished speaking before Monsieur le Vicomte de V—— squeezed my arm tightly and cried:

"Ah! the ingratitude of women! If there is anything on earth more ungrateful than a king, it is a nation; but, my dear sir, a woman is more ungrateful than the two put together. A married woman treats us like the citizens of a constitutional monarchy treat a king: although they are assured of a fine existence in a fine country, although the Government gives itself a world of trouble with gendarmes, Chambers, an administration and the whole paraphernalia of an army, in order to prevent a nation from starving, to light cities at the expense of its citizens, to keep everybody warm under the sun of the forty-fifth degree of latitude, and finally to forbid anyone but the collectors to extort money; although it has more or less fine roads built . . . not one advantage of such a fine Utopia is appreciated! The citizens want something more! . . . They are not in the least ashamed to demand the right to walk on these roads at their own sweet will, and to know where the money that is paid to the collectors goes; finally, the sovereign would have to yield to each person a little of the throne if we were to listen to the gossip of a few unimportant writers, or to adopt certain tricolor ideas, puppets that are manipulated by so-called patriots, regular highwaymen, always eager to sell their consciences for a million, a woman or a ducal crown."

"Monsieur le Vicomte," I said, "I agree with you per-

fectly in regard to the last point; but what will you say in reply to the perfectly just demands of your wife?"

"Monsieur, I shall . . . I shall reply like the governments who are not as stupid as the members of the opposition would like to have their supporters believe. I would begin by formulating a sort of Constitution by which my wife would be declared absolutely free. I would recognize her right to do as she pleases, to write to whomsoever she wishes and to receive letters which she may deny me. My wife will have all the rights of the English Parliament; I will let her talk as much as she wants to, argue and propose energetic measures, but without letting her put them into execution, and then, after that, why, I will see!"

"By Saint Joseph!" said I to myself, "here is a man who understands the science of marriage as well as I do.—Then you will see, monsieur," I answered aloud, in order to obtain more ample revelations, "that one fine day you will be treated just like all the rest."

"Monsieur," he gravely replied, "permit me to finish. That is what great statesmen call a theory, but they know how to make that theory vanish like smoke; and ministers possess better than any Normandy lawyer the art of making the *form* dominate the *matter*. Monsieur de Metternich and Monsieur de Pilat, men of great worth, have been asking themselves for quite some time whether Europe is in her right mind, if she is dreaming, if she knows where she is going, if she has ever reasoned, a thing which is impossible to women, masses and nations. Messieurs de Metternich and de Pilat are frightened by the trend of this century toward the mania of constitutions, as the preceding one was mad over philosophy, and Luther's time mad over the reform of the Roman religion; for it really seems as if the centuries were like conspirators who progress toward the same goal by different roads, giving each other the password. But they are alarming themselves unnecessarily, and this is the only thing for which I condemn them, for they are right to wish to enjoy power, without having some *bourgeois* arrive on a certain day from the remotest parts

of their six respective realms to vex them. How is it that such remarkable men could not divine the deep moral contained in the constitutional comedy and realize that the highest policy would be to leave a bone for the century to pick? I absolutely share their opinion regarding sovereignty. A *power* or government is a moral being that is as interested in its own preservation as any man is in his. The sentiment of preservation is directed by an essential principle that can be expressed in four words: *Not to lose anything*. In order to accomplish this, one must grow or remain infinite; for a stationary government is of no value. If it retrogrades, it is no longer a power—it is influenced by another one. I am aware, like these gentlemen are, of the false position in which an infinite power is placed, when it makes a concession. It thus allows the formation within itself of another power whose essence will be to grow. The one will necessarily annihilate the other, for every living being tends toward the greatest possible development of its strength. Therefore, a power never makes any concessions that it does not try to regain. This struggle between the two powers constitutes our ponderous governments, whose workings unnecessarily alarm the patriarch of Austrian diplomacy, because, comedy for comedy, the most lucrative and least dangerous is the one that France and England are playing. These two countries have said to their people: ‘You are free!’ and the nations were satisfied; they enter the government-like zeroes, which give value to unities. But, should the nation want to move, then the Government begins the drama of Sancho’s dinner, when the equerry, having become the master of his island on dry land, tries to eat. Now, we men should parody this scene in our own households. Thus, my wife has the right to go out, but she must tell me where she is going, how she is going, what takes her to the place she is going to, and when she will return. Instead of exacting this information with the brutality that is displayed by our police, which will no doubt improve, some day, I am careful to adopt the most gracious manner. On my lips, in my eyes, over my features appear in turn all the signs of curiosity and indifference, gravity

and mirth, contradiction and love. These are little matrimonial scenes full of wit, grace and cleverness and they are most agreeable to play. The day that I lifted the wreath of orange blossoms from my wife's head, I realized that we had played, like at the crowning of a king, the first scenes of a long comedy. I have gendarmes!—I have my Royal Guard, my State Attorneys!" he resumed with a sort of enthusiasm. "Do I ever suffer madame to go out unaccompanied by a liveried footman? Isn't that in the best of taste? without taking into account the pleasure she derives from saying to her acquaintances: 'I have servants.' But my principle of preservation has always been to make my outings coincide with hers and since two years I have proved to her that it is an ever new pleasure for me to act as her escort. If the weather is bad, I try to teach her how to drive a smart trap; but I can tell you that I do it in such a manner that she will not learn soon! . . . If by chance, or by the effect of her will, she wanted to escape without a passport, that is to say, alone in her carriage, haven't I got a coachman and a footman? My wife can go where she pleases, but she is always accompanied by a retinue and I can rest peacefully. . . . But, my dear sir, just consider how many ways we have of destroying, in practice, the matrimonial chart and the letter by the interpretation! I have noticed that the customs of society comprise an idleness which takes up half a woman's life without letting her feel that she is living. As for myself, I have formed the plan of adroitly bringing my wife to the age of forty without letting her give a thought to adultery, the same as the departed Musson used to amuse himself by taking a *bourgeois* from the Rue Saint-Denis to Pierrefitte without having him notice that he had left the shadow of Saint-Leu's steeple."

"What," I exclaimed, interrupting him, "have you by chance divined those admirable deceptions which I thought of writing about in my Meditation entitled, 'The Art of Putting Death into Life.' Alas! I believed I was the first one to discover that science. That short title had been suggested to me by the tale of a young physician in an

admirable unpublished composition of Crabbe. In this work, the English poet has personified a fantastic being called *Life in Death*. That personage pursues across the oceans of the world a living skeleton named *Death in Life*. I remember that few people among the guests of the elegant translator of English poetry understood the mysterious meaning of this fable, as true as it is fantastical. Only I, who was plunged in a brutish silence, thought of the entire generations which, impelled by *Life*, pass without having lived. Thousands, nay, millions of women passed before my mind's eye, all of whom had died full of sorrow at the thought of having wasted the hours of their ignorant youth. In the far away, I saw arising a scornful Meditation, I could already hear its sarcastic laugh; and no doubt you will kill it. . . . But do tell me quickly the means you have found to help a woman waste the fleeting instants when she is in the flower of her beauty and the prime of her desires. . . . Perhaps you may leave me a few stratagems, a few ruses to describe . . ."

The Viscount began to laugh at my disappointment as an author, and said in a pleased tone:

"My wife, like all the young women of the present time, spent four years drumming on a helpless piano. She has read Beethoven, hummed the airs of Rossini and gone over Crammer's exercises. Now, I took good care to convince her of her superiority in music; in order to do it, I have applauded her, listened without a murmur to the deadliest sonatas and resigned myself to letting her have a box at the Bouffons. I have thus obtained three peaceful evenings in the seven which the Lord created. I am always on the lookout for "musical houses." In Paris are salons which are just like German snuff-boxes, a kind of perpetual *Componiums*, where I go regularly and sicken myself with harmony, and which my wife calls concerts. And most of the time she just buries herself in her music."

"Eh! monsieur, don't you know the danger that lies in developing the taste for singing in a woman, and allowing her to be a prey to all the excitement of a sedentary life?"

Now, you only need to feed her on mutton and let her drink plain water."

"My wife never eats anything but the white meat of poultry and I am always careful to have a ball come after a concert and a reception after a play at the Italiens! In this way, I have succeeded in having her retire, six months out of the twelve, between one and two in the morning. Ah! my dear sir, the benefits of this are incalculable! In the first place, each one of these necessary pleasures is granted as a favor, and therefore I am supposed to constantly follow the wishes of my wife: thus I persuade her, without saying a word, that she has been amusing herself since six o'clock in the evening, at which hour we dine and she dresses, until eleven in the morning, at which hour we arise."

"Ah! monsieur, how grateful she must feel toward you for such a full life!"

"Thus I have only about three dangerous hours left; but then, she has to study her music and her singing! . . . And then, haven't I always some drive to propose, or some calls to pay, or some landau to look over, etc.? This is not all. The finest thing about a woman is immaculate cleanliness and the time spent on this can never be too long; now, her toilet is the means of consuming the best part of the day."

"You are worthy of listening to me!" I cried. "Well, my dear sir, you will be able to make her waste four hours a day if you care to teach her an art unknown to the most fastidious of our fashionable women. . . . Tell Madame de V—— of the astounding precautions created by the Roman ladies' Oriental luxury, name all the slaves employed at the bath of the Empress Poppæa; the *unctores*, the *fricatrices*, the *alipilarili*, the *dropacistæ*, the *paratiltriæ*, the *picatrices*, the *tracatrices*, the swansdown dryers and all the rest? . . . Entertain her with that multitude of slaves whose list was given by Mirabeau in his *Erotika Biblion*. Her efforts to imitate these things will give you many an hour of peace without counting the pleasure that you will personally derive from the importation into your household of the system of the illustrious Romans, whose every hair, cun-

ningly arranged, had received showers of perfume, whose every vein seemed to have been regenerated in myrrh, flowers and baths, all absorbed to the sound of entrancingly voluptuous music."

"Eh! monsieur," retorted the husband, who was warming more and more to his subject, "have I not also admirable pretexts in her health? Her health, so precious and so dear to me, allows me to forbid her to leave the house in bad weather and thus I gain a fourth of the year. And have I not introduced the lovely rule of never going out without first kissing and saying: 'My darling pet, I am going out.' In a word, I have forestalled the future and have rendered my wife a prisoner in her home, like a recruit in his sentry-box. I have inspired her with incredible enthusiasm for her sacred maternal duties."

"By contradicting her?" I asked.

"Quite right!" he laughed. "I aver that it is impossible for a society woman to fulfill her social obligations, to manage her house, to yield to all the fashionable whims and those of a beloved husband, and to bring up her children. . . . Then she pretends that, like Cato who insisted on seeing how the nurse tended the great Pompey, she will allow no one but herself to care for the young intellects and tender bodies of the little human beings whose education begins in the cradle. You understand, sir, that my conjugal diplomacy would not be of great use if, after having pledged my wife to secrecy, I failed to ask her advice on everything and to constantly admonish her to do as she chooses. As this illusion of freedom is destined to hoodwink a woman who is quite clever, I am careful to make every sacrifice in order to convince Madame de V—— that she is the freest woman in Paris; and in order to attain this object, I try not to commit the great political blunders that our ministers so often are guilty of."

"I can see you," said I, "when you want to deprive your wife of one of the rights granted her by the chart, assuming a meek, inoffensive air, hiding the dagger under a rose and plunging it carefully into her breast the while you inquire in a sugary tone: 'Am I hurting you, dearest?' Per-

haps she replies, like a person on whose toes you have just trodden: 'On the contrary.'"

He could not help smiling and said:

"My wife will be very astonished at the Last Judgment, won't she?"

"I do not know," quoth I, "who will be the most surprised, your wife or yourself."

He frowned, but his countenance became serene again when I added:

"I am thankful, monsieur, for the opportunity which allowed me to become acquainted with you. Without your conversation, I would surely not have developed as well as you have, a few ideas which we hold in common. Therefore, I crave your permission to give this interview to the light. Where we have seen lofty political conceptions, others may see more or less keen shafts of sarcasm and I shall pass for a clever man in the eyes of both sides."

While I was trying to thank the Viscount (the first husband according to my own heart that I had so far met) he was leading me through his apartments where everything seemed to be irreproachable.

I was about to take leave of him, when he opened the door which led into a little boudoir and showed me around with the air of a man who is thinking: "Is there any way of committing the slightest breach of morality here without me being able to detect it?"

I replied to this silent question by one of those little bows with which guests acknowledge to their host their appreciation of some rare dish.

"My whole system," said he in a low tone, "was suggested to me by three words which my father heard Napoleon utter in the midst of the State Council, when the question of divorce was being argued. 'Adultery,' he cried, 'is merely a question of sofas!' So you see," added the Master of Requests, "I have been able to change these accomplices into spies." He showed me a pale yellow divan the cushions of which were rumpled. "Look, these marks show me that my wife had a headache and rested here for a while."

We walked toward the divan and suddenly beheld the word "Fool!" capriciously traced on the couch with four

*De ces je ne sais quoi, qu'une amante tira
Du verger de Cypris, labyrinthe des fées,
Et qu'un duc autrefois jugea si précieux
Qu'il voulut l'honorer d'une chevalerie,
Illustre et noble confrérie,
Moins pleine d'hommes que de dieux.**

"No one here has black hair!" exclaimed the husband, growing pale.

I departed in haste, for I felt such an irresistible desire to laugh, that I knew that I would not be able to control myself if I remained.

"Here is a judged man!" I said to myself. "He has only given his wife more pleasure by surrounding her with all those obstacles."

That idea saddened me. The occurrence completely destroyed three of my most important Meditations and the catholic infallibility of my work was undermined in its essence. I would have gladly given the sum with which many people would fain have bought one favor of the Vicomtesse de V——, for her chastity. But it was written that I was to keep my money.

Indeed, three days later, I happened upon the Master of Requests, in the *foyer* of the Italiens. As soon as he saw me, he ran up to me. Impelled by a sort of modesty, I endeavored to avoid him; but grabbing hold of my arm:

"Ah! I have just spent three cruel days," he whispered in my ear. "Fortunately, my wife is perhaps more innocent than a new-born babe."

"You have already told me that Madame la Vicomtesse was very clever," said I, with cruel *bonhomie*.

"Oh! to-night, I can appreciate a joke, for this very morning I had absolute proofs of my wife's fidelity. I had arisen early in order to finish a much-needed work. . . . Looking into the garden by chance, I suddenly perceived the valet of a general whose house is next to mine swiftly climb-

* *La Chose Impossible* (La Fontaine's *Contes et Nouvelles*).

ing over the wall. My wife's maid, sticking her head out of the hall, was patting my dog and covering the retreat of her sweetheart. I clutched my *lorgnon* and leveled it at the intruder; his hair was jet black! Ah! I was never so glad to see anyone in my life! But as you must think, during the day the trellis was torn down. So, my dear sir, if you ever marry, keep a watchdog and strew broken bottles on your garden walls."

"Did Madame la Vicomtesse notice your anxiety during the past three days?"

"Do you take me for a child?" he replied, shrugging his shoulders; "never in all my life had I been so light-hearted."

"Your are an unrecognized genius," I cried, "and you are not——"

He did not let me finish; for he disappeared when he saw one of his friends making a move to approach his wife.

What could we add that would not be a fastidious paraphrase of the teachings contained in this conversation? Everything in it is either bud or fruit. Nevertheless, you will realize, O husbands, that your happiness hangs by a thread.

MEDITATION XVII

THEORY OF THE BED

IT was about seven o'clock in the evening. Seated on their academical chairs, they formed a half-circle around the fireplace where a dim fire was burning, eternal symbol of the subject of their important discussions. From the grave but passionate faces of the assembled gathering, it was easy to guess that they were deliberating on the life, fortune and happiness of their fellow-creatures. Their only mandate was their conscience, like the associates of an ancient and mysterious tribunal; but they represented far greater interests than those of kings and nations, for they spoke in the name of the passions and happiness of the infinite generations that were to come after them.

The grandson of the famous Boulle was seated before

a round table on which was the convicting evidence, executed with rare cleverness; I, wretched secretary, occupied a place at this desk so as to frame a report of the séance.

"Gentlemen," said an old man, "the first question which will be submitted to your deliberations is clearly indicated in a passage of a letter written to the Princess of Wales, Caroline d'Anspach, by the widow of Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV., and mother of the Regent: 'The queen of Spain has a way of making her husband do everything she wants him to do. The king is very devout and believes that he would be damned if he touched any woman but his wife, and the good prince has a very amorous temperament. In this way, the queen obtains anything she wants from him. She has had castors put on his bed. If he refuses her anything, she just pushes his bed away from hers. If he grants her her wish, the beds come together again, much to the delight of the king, as he is very given to——' I shall proceed no further, gentlemen, as the virtuous frankness of the German princess might be deemed immoral."

Should wise husbands adopt the bed with castors? This is the problem which we have to solve.

The unanimity of the votes left no doubt regarding the matter. I was told to consign to the report of the deliberations that, if two married people slept in two separate beds in the same room, the beds should not have square castors.

"But without having the present decision influence in any way whatever mode of sleeping is thought best for married people," one member remarked.

The president handed me an elegantly bound volume containing the original edition, published in 1788, of the letters of Madame Charlotte-Elizabeth de Bavière, widow of Monsieur, only brother of Louis XIV., and while I was transcribing the quoted passage, he resumed:

"Why, gentlemen, you must have received in your homes the bulletin containing the second question."

"I ask the right to speak!" cried the youngest of the gathering of jealous husbands.

The president sat down after having made a gesture of assent.

"Gentlemen," said the young husband, "are we fully prepared to deliberate on a matter so grave as the one presented by the almost general indiscretion of beds? Is there not a greater question to be solved than the mere shape, etc.? As for myself, I see therein a problem which concerns human intelligence. The mystery of conception, gentlemen, is still shrouded in the darkness that modern science is just beginning to dispel. We do not know up to what point exterior influences act on microscopical animals, whose discovery is due to the untiring patience of the Hills, Bakers, Joblots, Eichorns, Gleichens, Spallanzanias, and more especially of Mueller and lastly of Monsieur Bory-de-Saint-Vincent. The imperfection of the bed contains a musical question of the highest importance, and as for myself, I declare that I have written to Italy in order to obtain certain information concerning the manner in which beds are generally established there. We shall then know if there are many springs, screws and castors, and if the dryness of the wood due to the sun's action does not produce *ab ovo* the harmony whose sentiment is innate with the Italians. On account of these motives I recommend an adjournment."

"Eh! are we here to debate on music!" exclaimed a gentleman from the West, rising abruptly. "It is, above all, a question of morals, and this question dominates everything else."

"However," said one of the most influential members of the council, "the advice of the first speaker does not seem to me devoid of interest. In the last century, gentlemen, one of our most philosophically humorous and humorously philosophical writers, Sterne, complained of the small care which was taken in the making of men. 'Shame,' he cried, 'the one who copies the divine physiognomy of man receives plaudits and wreaths, while the one who presents the masterpiece, the prototype of the imitation, has, like virtue, but his handiwork to reward him!' Would it not be better to try to improve the human race instead of horseflesh? Gentlemen, I once passed through a little town in the Orléanais, where the entire population consisted of hunchbacks and wretched-looking people, real children of misfortune.

Well, the remark of the first speaker reminds me that all the beds there were in bad condition and that nothing but hideous sights presented themselves to the eyes of those married couples. Eh! gentlemen, can it be that our spirits are in the same state as our ideas when, instead of divine music made by angels flitting hither and thither in the heavens, the most strident notes of the most importunate, impatient and horrible terrestrial melody reach our ears? Perhaps we owe some of the greatest geniuses that have honored humanity to solidly constructed beds and the turbulent population which engendered the French Revolution was perhaps conceived on a multitude of shaky couches with carved and insecure posts; while the Orientals, whose various races are so fine, have a special bed system. I am in favor of an adjournment."

And the gentleman sat down.

A man who belonged to the Methodist sect arose:

"Why change the question? We are not here to improve the race nor the work. We should not lose sight of the interests of marital jealousy and the principles of wholesome morality. Are you ignorant of the fact that the noise that you complain of seems more fearful to the uncertain wife than the thunder-clap of the Last Judgment? Are you forgetting that all the suits of criminal conversation have only been won by husbands because of this conjugal plaint? I advise you, gentlemen, to consult the divorces of Lord Abergavenny, of the Viscount of Bolingbroke, of the deceased Queen, of Eliza Draper, Mrs. Harris, in a word, all those that are published in the twenty volumes issued by . . ." (The secretary did not catch the name of the English publisher.)

The adjournment was pronounced. The youngest member proposed to take up a collection to reward the author of the best dissertation addressed to the Society on the question looked upon by Sterne as having so much importance; but, at the end of the séance, there were only eighteen shillings in the president's hat.

The deliberation of the Society which was recently formed in London for the improvement of marriage and morals, and which Lord Byron pursued with his sarcasm, was trans-

mitted to us through the kindness of the Honorable W. Hawkins, Esq., first cousin of the famous Captain Clutterbuck.

This excerpt may serve to solve the difficulties that are to be found in the theory of the bed relative to its construction.

But the author of this book thinks that the English association has given too much importance to this prejudicial question. There are perhaps just as many good reasons for being a *rossiniste* as there are for being a *solidiste* in the matter of beds, and the author admits that he is above or beneath solving the difficulty. He believes with Lawrence Sterne that it is shameful for European civilization to have so few physiological observations on *callipédie*, and he renounces giving his Meditations on the subject, because it would be hard to couch them in prudish language and because they might be misunderstood or wrongly interpreted. This contempt will leave an eternal gap in this part of the book; but he will have the great satisfaction of bequeathing a fourth work to the coming century which he thus enriches by all that he does not accomplish, a negative magnificence, the example of which will be followed by all those who claim to have a great many ideas.

The bed theory will give us much more important questions to solve than the ones which are furnished our neighbors by castors and the murmurs of the criminal conversation.

We recognize only three ways of organizing a bed (in the usual sense which this word implies) among civilized nations, and principally among the privileged classes, to whom this book is addressed.

These three ways are:

1st—Twin Beds.

2d—Separate Rooms.

3d—One Bed.

Before proceeding to examine these three methods of cohabitation which must necessarily exert very different influences on the happiness of husbands and wives, we should throw a rapid glance on the action of the bed and on the rôle which it plays in the political economy of human life.

The most incontestable principle in the whole matter is that *beds were made to sleep in*.

It would be easy to prove that the custom of sleeping together was introduced very late in respect to the antiquity of marriage.

By what syllogisms did men reach the stage of putting into practice such a harmful custom as that, with regard to happiness, health, pleasure, and even vanity? This would be interesting to investigate.

If you knew that one of your rivals had found a way of exposing you, before the eyes of the one who is dear to you, in a position in which you were supremely ridiculous, for instance, while your mouth was distorted like a tragedy mask, or while your eloquent lips, like the spout of a fountain, distilled drop by drop pure water, you would probably feel like stabbing him. This rival is Sleep. Is there a man in the world who has any idea of what he looks like and what he does when he is asleep?

We are in the toils of an unknown power which seizes us unconsciously and renders us like living corpses. It manifests itself in the strangest ways; some people are clever when they sleep, while others are stupid.

There are some people who sleep with their mouths hanging open in the most ludicrous fashion.

Others there are who snore loudly enough to make the walls shake.

Most people look like those young demons by Michael Angelo who mock at passers-by with their protruding tongues.

I know of only one person in the world who sleeps normally, and that is the Agamemnon that Guérin has shown stretched out on his couch just when Clytæmnestra, incited by Ægysthus, advanced upon him to murder him. Therefore, it has always been my ambition to appear like the "king of kings" as soon as I shall have the terrible dread of being seen in my sleep by other eyes than those belonging to Providence. After I had once seen my old nurse *soufflant des pois*, to use a popular but consecrated expression, I added to the litany which I recite to Saint-Honoré,

my patron saint, a prayer that he would forever guard me from such pitiful eloquence.

When a man wakes up in the morning with a dazed expression on his face, his head draped in a bandanna which falls over his left eye like a policeman's cap, he is certainly ridiculous and it would be hard to recognize in him the glorious husband celebrated by Rousseau; still, there is a gleam of intelligence in that half-dead face. And if you, artists, are anxious to see caricatures, just travel in a mail-coach and in each little village where the coach stops, look at the various faces! But, even if you are a hundred times more ridiculous than those weird countenances, at least your mouth is shut and your eyes are open and you have some sort of expression. . . . Do you know how you looked an hour before your awakening, or during your first sleep, when, neither man nor beast, you were falling under the spell of dreams issuing from the Ivory Gates? . . . That is a secret between your wife and God!

Was it to be constantly reminded of the stupidity of sleep that the Romans always decorated their beds with an ass's head? . . . We shall leave that question to the gentlemen who compose the membership of the Académie des Inscriptions.

Surely, the first man who through the Devil's agency established the custom of sharing his wife's bed, must have possessed to perfection the art of slumbering gracefully. Now, you must not forget to add to the sciences which must be acquired before marriage, the talent to sleep with elegance. Therefore, we shall place here, as an appendix to axiom XXV of the Conjugal Catechism, the two following axioms:

A husband's slumber should be as light as a watchdog's, so that he may never be caught sleeping.

A man should accustom himself from childhood to sleep bareheaded.

Some poets pretend that modesty and the so-called mysteries of love are the causes for uniting two married people in one bed; but it is well known that if primitive man sought dense thickets, the moss of wild ravines, the stone roof of

caves to protect his pleasures, it was because love left him practically defenseless toward his enemies. No, it is not any more natural to place two heads on one pillow than it is reasonable to muffle up one's neck in a tie. But civilization appeared and imprisoned one million men in a space of four square miles; gathered them in droves and herded them in streets, houses, apartments, rooms and spaces eight feet square; in a little while it will endeavor to make them telescope themselves like the lenses of an opera-glass.

From this and from a great many other causes, such as economy, timidity, and wrongful jealousy, sprang cohabitation; and this custom created the recurring and simultaneous awakening and retiring.

And here is the most capricious thing in the world, here is the most eminently mobile sentiment, which is valuable only through its sudden inspirations and desires, which only pleases through the genuineness of its expansions, here, in a word, is Love subjected to a monastic rule and to the geometry of the bureau of longitudes!

If I were a father, I would hate the child who, morning and night, had an outburst of sentiment and came to welcome me at fixed hours: that is how every generous and spontaneous human feeling is crushed. Judge by this what love at stated times must be!

It belongs to the Creator of all things to make the sun rise and set, morning and evening, in the midst of gorgeous surroundings, forever new, and nobody here below can, in spite of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau's hyperbole, play the rôle of the sun.

The result of these preliminary observations is that it is unnatural to find two heads under one canopy;

That a man, when asleep, is almost always ridiculous;

Lastly, that constant cohabitation presents the greatest dangers for husbands.

We shall, therefore, try to accommodate our customs to Nature's laws and combine Nature and customs so that a husband may find a useful auxiliary and a means of defense in the mahogany of his bed.

I.—Twin Beds

If the most brilliant and handsome of husbands wishes to be minotaurized after a year's time, he will surely arrive at the desired result if he has the imprudence to unite two beds under the voluptuous dome of one alcove.

The decree is brief, and here are the motives:

The first husband who invented twin beds must have been some *accoucheur* who, fearing that in his sleep he might injure his wife's unborn child, hit upon this device to protect her.

But no, it must have been some predestinated husband who feared either himself or a tuneful catarrh.

Perhaps it was some young man, who, fearing his excessive tenderness and affection, found himself too near the edge of the bed and therefore in the imminent danger of falling out, or too near his charming spouse to let her have the proper rest.

But might it not have been some Maintenon helped by her confessor, or an ambitious wife desiring to rule her husband? Or, more surely, a pretty little Pompadour afflicted with that Parisian infirmity so amusingly described by Monsieur de Maurepas in the quatrain which earned him his long disgrace and which certainly contributed to the misfortunes of the reign of Louis XVI.:

*Iris, on aime vos appas,
Vos grâces sont vives et franches;
Et les fleurs naissent sous vos pas,
Mais ce ne sont que des fleurs. . . .*

Lastly, why might it not have been a philosopher dismayed at the disillusion that a woman must experience when she beholds a sleeping man? And *he* most certainly always rolled himself in a blanket and slept bareheaded.

Unknown author of this Jesuitical method, whoever you may be, in the Devil's name, I extend you greeting and brotherhood! . . . You have been the cause of a great number of misfortunes. Your handiwork bears the stamp of all

half-measures; it satisfies nothing and participates in the inconveniences of the two other measures without extending their benefits.

How can the nineteenth century man, this supremely intelligent being, who has displayed supernatural power, has employed his genius to disguise the mechanism of his existence, to ennoble his needs so that he would not have to despise them, who has gone so far as to extract the treasures, perfumes, nay, the very souls, from Chinese leaves, Egyptian beans and Mexican grains; who has cut crystal, carved silver, melted gold, painted clay and, in a word, solicited every art to find decorations for his alimentary processes; how is it that this king, after having concealed the second of his miseries under sheer fabrics, covered it with diamonds, strewn it with rubies, buried it beneath fine linens and diaphanous muslins and the wonderful designs of real lace, should let all this luxury wreck itself on a bed? . . . What is the use of rendering the entire universe an accomplice of our existence, our lies and this poesy? What is the use of making laws, religions and moral systems, if the invention of an upholsterer (perhaps it was an upholsterer who invented twin beds) robs our love of all its illusions, despoils it of its majestic cortège and only leaves its odium and ugliness? For that is the whole story of twin beds.

LXIII

To appear either sublime or grotesque, this is the alternative to which we have reduced desire.

When shared, our love is sublime; but sleep in separate beds, and yours will always be grotesque. The misunderstandings to which this semi-separation gives rise, can be reduced to two situations that will reveal to us the causes of a great number of misfortunes.

Toward midnight, a young wife yawns and puts her hair in curl-papers. I do not know whether her depression comes from a headache which is about to declare itself on the right or left side of her head or if she is in one of those moods where everything looks dark; but to watch her lan-

guidly doing her hair, to watch her slowly taking off her garters, it seems to me that she would rather drown herself than seek a much-needed rest. At that particular moment, she is under some degree of the North pole, somewhere in Spitzberg or Greenland. Careless and cold, she gets into her bed thinking perhaps, like Madame Gauthier Shandy, that the next day will be one of illness, that her husband really comes home late, that the floating island she had for dinner was not sweet enough and that she owes her dress-maker over five hundred francs; in a word, she thinks of all the disagreeable things that a woman can think of. After a little while, in comes the husband; having been out on business, he has taken a little punch and has become emancipated. He takes off his boots, drops his clothes on a chair, leaves his socks on the floor and his shoe-horn in front of the fireplace; and while he is draping his head in a red handkerchief, without even giving himself the trouble to hide its protruding ends, he makes a few remarks to his better-half which constitute sometimes the entire conversation at those nebulous times when one's mind is half asleep. "So you are in bed! Goodness, how cold it is to-night! You are not very talkative, my dear! You are already rolled up in your sheets! . . . Sly mouse! you are making believe that you are asleep! . . ." These remarks are punctuated by yawns; and after a number of little events which vary according to persons, our hero dives into his bed, which gives forth a loud groan. But here, on the fantastical cloth that seems to spread before us as soon as we close our lids, appear the image of a pretty face, the outlines of well-shaped limbs; here are the graceful forms he has seen during the day. He is pricked by impetuous desires. . . . He glances at his wife. He sees a charming face framed by delicate embroidery; as drowsy as he is, he nevertheless distinguishes her eyes, half-hidden by lacy frills; divine outlines are revealed by the counterpane. . . . My pet? . . . "I'm asleep, *mon ami*. . . ." How will he be able to land in this frigid region? I will grant that you are young, handsome, clever and attractive. How are you going to cross the channel which separates Greenland from Italy? The space that

lies between heaven and hell is not greater than the line which prevents your two beds from making one; for your wife is cold and you are a prey to ardent desires. If there were nothing more than the technical action of crossing from one bed to the other, that movement alone places the husband with his head bound in a bandanna in the most ridiculous position one can imagine. Danger, want of time, opportunity, everything between lovers tends to embellish these painful situations, for love has a golden mantle which it throws over all, even over the smoking débris of a town taken by storm; while, in order not to notice débris on the finest carpets, under the most beautiful silks, marriage has need of the enchantment of love. Even if it only takes you a second to reach your wife's boundaries, *Duty*, that divinity of matrimony, has had time to rise before her in all its hideousness.

Ah! to a cold woman how mad a man must appear when desire renders him alternately furious and tender, insolent and suppliant, as biting as an epigram and as gentle as a madrigal; when, in a word, he plays more or less cleverly the scene where, in *Venice Saved*, the genius of Orway represents Senator Antonio repeating a hundred times while he kneels before Aquilina: "Aquilina, Quilina, Lina, Aquil, Naquil!" without obtaining anything but lashings for his pains. In the eyes of every woman, even his legitimate spouse, the more passionate a man is under such circumstances, the more grotesque he appears. When he commands, he is odious, and he will be deceived if he abuses his power. Here you should bring to mind several aphorisms of the Conjugal Catechism, and you will soon see that you are violating its most sacred principles. Whether or not a woman yields, twin beds introduce into marriage something so abrupt, so clear, that the chastest woman and the cleverest husband cannot help becoming immodest.

This scene, which takes place in a thousand different ways and which can be brought about by a thousand other incidents, has, as a sequel, the other situation, which is less amusing and more terrible.

One evening, as I was discoursing upon these grave mat-

ters with the late Monsieur de Nocé, of whom I have already spoken, a tall old man with white hair, his most intimate friend, and whose name I shall not mention, because he is still living, gazed upon us with rather a melancholy air. We guessed that he was about to relate some scandalous adventure, and thenceforth looked upon him in the same way that the stenographer of the *Moniteur* must gaze upon a minister about to deliver a speech which has already been made known to him (the stenographer). The narrator was an old emigrated Marquis whose fortune and family had perished in the Revolution. The Marquise having been one of the most inconsistent women of her day, he was well qualified to discuss feminine nature. As he had reached the age where everything, so to speak, is viewed from the grave, he related his experiences as if they had happened to Mark Antony or to Cleopatra.

“My young friend,” he said to me, for it was I who had closed the discussion, “your remarks bring to my mind an evening where one of my friends acted in such a manner as to prejudice his wife against him for all time. Now, in my time, a woman could take her revenge very easily, for there were not many slips ‘’twixt the cup and the lips.’ My friends slept in separate beds, but under the same canopy. They had just returned from a very brilliant ball given by the Comte de Mercy, the Emperor’s ambassador. The husband had lost quite a lot of money at the gaming-tables and was completely buried in his thoughts. He was wondering how he could pay six thousand francs the next day! And you remember, Nocé, how often it was hard to raise a hundred *écus* among ten *mousquetaires*. . . . The young wife, as it always happens in those cases, was provokingly cheerful. ‘Give Monsieur le Marquis everything he needs for his toilet,’ she said to the valet. In those times, people used to dress when they retired. This strange order did not bring the husband out of his meditation. Then, madame, aided by her maid, proceeded to deck herself out for the night. ‘Did I please you this evening?’ she inquired. ‘You always please me!’ replied the Marquis, continuing to walk up and down the room. ‘You are very thoughtful! Why

don't you speak to me, *beau ténébreux?*' said she, placing herself in front of him in the most attractive *négligé*. But you can form no idea of the fascination of the Marquise; one had to know her. Eh! she was a woman you knew, Nocé!" he said with a rather sarcastic smile. "Well, in spite of her wiles and her beauty, she failed to make her husband forget his loss, and she retired alone. But women always have a good stock of resources; so, just as the Marquis was climbing into his bed, she exclaimed: 'Oh! how cold I am!' 'So am I,' he replied. 'How is it that the beds have not been warmed?' And I rang . . ."

The Comte de Nocé could not refrain from laughing and the Marquis stopped short.

Not to divine a woman's desires, to snore when she is awake, to be in Siberia when she is in the tropics, these are only a few of the drawbacks of twin beds. What will not a passionate woman resort to when she finds out that her husband is a sound sleeper?

I am indebted to Beyle for an Italian anecdote, to which his dry and sarcastic manner of speech lent great charm. He told it to me as an instance of feminine boldness.

Ludovico's palace was at one end of Milan and the Comtessa Perneti's was at the other end. One night, Ludovico, determined to risk everything in order to gaze for a second upon his beloved's countenance, enters as if by magic into his mistress's home. He reaches the nuptial chamber. Eliza Perneti, whose heart no doubt shared her lover's desire, heard his footsteps and recognized them. Suddenly, through the walls, she beholds a passionate face. She leaves the conjugal couch, reaches the threshold of the room, gives her lover one rapid glance, seizes his hand and drags him after her.

"But your husband will kill you!" he gasped.

"Perhaps."

But all this is nothing. Let us grant that a good many husbands are light sleepers. Let us grant that they do not snore and that they are always aware of the degree of latitude of their wives! What is more, all the reasons we

have adduced to condemn the use of double beds, will be allowed to have little weight. Even so, one last consideration should proscribe the habit of uniting two beds under one canopy.

In the position in which a husband finds himself, we have considered the bed as a means of defense. It is only here that he is able to find out whether his wife's love for him is growing or decreasing. It is the matrimonial barometer. Now, when you sleep in separate beds, you cannot know these things. You will learn, when you reach "Civil War" (see third part), of what tremendous usefulness the bed is and how many secrets are involuntarily revealed there by a woman.

Therefore, you must never be fooled by the false *bonhomie* of twin beds.

It is the silliest, most perfidious and dangerous invention in the world. Shame and curses on its inventor!

But, however dangerous this method may be to young married people, it is very wholesome and proper for couples who have been wedded twenty years. The husband and wife are much more comfortable and can pursue without restrictions the duets occasioned by their respective catarrhs. They even may thank the groans that a painful rheumatism or stubborn gout causes them to utter, for a laborious renewal of their old-time ardor, if, however, their coughs are not too unremitting.

We did not think it advisable to mention the exceptions which sometimes justify a husband using the twin-bed system. These are calamities that must be endured. However, Bonaparte's opinion was that after married people had once exchanged their souls and their perspiration (those were his words, *échange d'âme et de transpiration*), nothing, not even sickness, should ever separate them again. This matter, however, is far too delicate to be subjected to principles.

Some narrow-minded people may state that there are a number of old-fashioned families whose erotic jurisprudence is unchangeable regarding the matter of twin beds, and that their members are happy from "generation to genera-

tion." But, in reply, the author will only say that he knows a number of very respectable people who spend their lives watching billiard games.

Therefore, this method should be discountenanced by all intelligent people and we shall pass on to the second manner of organizing the nuptial couch.

II.—*Separate Rooms*

In all Europe there are not one hundred husbands in every nation who possess sufficiently well the science of marriage and of life to be able to live in a separate apartment and away from their wives.

To be able to put this practice into execution is the last word of intellectual and virile power.

Two married people living in separate apartments have either divorced or found happiness. They either hate or worship one another.

We shall not try to deduce here the admirable precepts of this theory which aims to render constancy a delightful and easy task. This reserve on the part of the author is respect and not inability. It is sufficient for him to have proclaimed that, only through this system, can married people realize the dreams of so many great souls: it will be understood by all the faithful.

As to the laymen—it will soon make short work of their curious inquiries, by telling them that the aim of the institution is to procure happiness for one woman. What man would deprive society of all the talents he thinks he possesses for the benefit of a woman! However, to render one's mate happy is one of the best titles to glory that can be produced in the Valley of Josaphat, since the Scriptures tell us that Eve was not content with Paradise. She wanted to taste of forbidden fruit, the eternal symbol of adultery.

But there exists a peremptory reason which prevents us from developing this brilliant theory. In this work it would be a *hors d'œuvre*. In the position in which we have supposed a married couple to be, the man imprudent enough to sleep away from his wife would not be worthy of pity

were some misfortune to befall him, for he would have called it down upon his head.

Therefore, let us sum up.

All men are not doughty enough to undertake to live in separate apartments; while every man can, after a fashion, cope with the difficulties which arise from sleeping in one bed with his wife.

So we shall try to solve the difficulties that superficial minds might perceive in this last system, for which we very plainly show our preference.

But may this paragraph, which is silent, so to speak, and abandoned to the comments of a great many couples, serve as a pedestal for the impressive figure of Lycurgus, the ancient legislator to whom the Greeks owed such keen observations on marriage. May his system be understood by future generations! And if modern customs are too lax to adopt it in its entirety, may they at least be imbued with the spirit of this admirable legislation.

III.—One Bed

One December night, Frederick the Great, gazing upon the heavens where the stars shone clearly and brightly, announcing sharp cold, exclaimed: "This is weather that is going to give many a soldier to Prussia!"

Thus the king, in one brief sentence, expressed the greatest drawback which is to be found in the constant cohabitation of married couples. It is permissible to both Napoleon and Frederick to appreciate a woman by the number of children she has brought into the world; but a talented husband should, according to the maxims of the thirteenth Meditation, consider the manufacturing of a child only as a means of defense, and it rests with him whether he considers it wise to make use of it lavishly.

This observation leads to mysteries which the physiological Muse cannot probe. She has consented to enter the nuptial chamber when it is untenanted, but, modest and virtuous, she would blush were she to witness the sports of love.

As the Muse here shields her eyes behind her white fingers

so as not to see anything between the spaces, like a young girl, she will take advantage of this attack of modesty to decry our customs.

In England, the bedroom of a married couple is sacred. The man and wife alone have the privilege of entering it and more than one lady of quality makes her own bed, it is said. Of all the fads of our English neighbors, why is it that the only one we have scorned is the one whose delicacy and mystery should appeal to all refined souls on the Continent? Fine-feeling women condemn the immodesty with which strangers in France are allowed access to this sanctuary of marriage. As for ourselves, who have so energetically denounced the women who emphasize their pregnancy abroad, our opinion on the subject is firm. If we want bachelorhood to respect matrimony, married people should have some regard for the susceptibility of bachelors.

We must acknowledge that the mere act of sleeping with your wife every night may be thought a most insolent demonstration of fatuity.

However, such is the decision of the doctor of conjugal arts and sciences. In the first place, unless the resolution is made never to sleep at home, this way is the only one which remains for a husband, as we have pointed out the dangers of the two preceding systems. We therefore must try to prove that the last method offers more advantages and fewer drawbacks than the first ones, as regards the crisis which may confront a couple.

Our remarks on twin beds must have shown husbands that, in a sense, they are always expected to be of the same degree of temperature as their wives; now, it seems quite natural to us that this perfect harmony should be easy enough to establish under the white shield that covers them with its protection; and this is always a very great advantage.

Indeed, nothing is easier than to verify at all times the degree of love and expansion to which a woman attains, when the one pillow serves as resting-place for both heads.

Mankind carries a memorandum which shows clearly and without error the sum total of sensuality men and women possess. This strange *gynometer* is the palm of the hand.

The hand is effectively the organ which reveals the soonest our sensual affections. *Chirology* is a fifth work which I bequeath to my successors, for I shall only study the elements which are useful to my subject.

The hand is the essential organ of touch. Now, this is the one sense which can replace the others most satisfactorily, but which they cannot very well replace. The hand alone has executed whatever man has invented up to the present time and has, so to speak, become *action*. The entire sum of our energy passes through the hand and it is noteworthy that great men usually have fine hands, the perfection of which is the distinctive characteristic of high callings. Christ accomplished all his miracles by the laying on of hands. The hand transudes life; wherever it is laid it leaves magic traces, and it shares in half of the pleasures of love. A physician can discover all the peculiarities of our system through our hands. They exhale, more than any other part of the body, nervous fluids or the unknown substance which, for want of a better name, must be called the *will*. The eye may disclose the state of the soul, but the hand discloses the secrets of both our bodies and our minds. We acquire the faculty of silencing our eyes, our lips, our brows; but the hand does not dissemble, and no other feature can be compared to it for richness of expression. The warmth and coolness it is susceptible of are imperceptible shades which escape the notice of thoughtless people; but a man can distinguish them, if he has ever studied the anatomy of sentiments and life. Thus, the hand can be dry, moist, burning, icy, soft, hard and unctuous. It trembles, hardens, softens or becomes lubricated. In a word, it offers an inexplicable phenomenon that one is tempted to call the *incarnation of thought*. It is the despair of the sculptor and the artist when they desire to reproduce the changeable aspects of its mysterious lineaments. To stretch forth a hand to a man means to save him. It is the pledge of our every sentiment. From all time, witches have read our fate in the lines of the palm, which have nothing fantastical and which correspond with the principles of character and life. Lastly, one says, "the hand of God,"

“the heavy hand of the law,” and when one wishes to express a bold enterprise, “*un coup de main.*”

To learn how to read sentiments by the atmospherical variations of the hand (which a woman invariably yields without distrust), is a far more satisfactory and reliable study than that of the face. •

Therefore, by acquiring that science, you can arm yourself with great power and you will have a thread to guide you through the labyrinths of the most capricious hearts. Now, your cohabitation is acquitted of many mistakes and enriched by many treasures.

Now, do you believe in good faith that you should be a Hercules in order to spend each night with your wife? What an absurdity! In the position in which he finds himself, a clever husband has more resources to help him out than Madame de Maintenon, when she was compelled, at a dinner, to make a story take the place of a missing course.

Buffon and several other physiologists hold that our organs are more fatigued by desire than by the strongest sensations. Indeed, is not desire a sort of intuitive possession? Is it not, in regard to visible action, what the accidents of the intellectual life which we enjoy during sleep are to the events of our material existence? That strong *apprehension* of things, does it not necessitate a more powerful interior action than the exterior one? If our gestures are only the manifestation of actions accomplished by our minds, judge how repeated desires must consume our vital fluids? But do not passions, which are but masses of desires, leave their mark on the faces of gamblers, ambitious men, and do they not use up the body with marvelous rapidity?

Then, these observations must contain the germs of a mysterious system, equally indorsed by Plato and Epicurus; we shall leave it to your meditations, covered by the veil which was used on Egyptian statues.

But the greatest mistake that men can make is to believe that love does not reside in those elusive moments which, according to the fine expression of Bossuet, resemble in our

lives, the nails strewn on walls; they appear very numerous to the eye, but when they are gathered together they are but a handful.

Love is almost always made up of conversation. There is only one thing inexhaustible about a lover and that is kindness, grace and delicacy. To feel everything, to divine and anticipate everything; to reproach without hurting; to double the value of an action by delicate proceedings; to put flattery into actions and not into words; to make oneself understood rather than to grasp quickly; to touch without rudeness; to put a caressing note in one's voice and in one's glance; never to embarrass; to amuse without offending good taste; always to flatter the heart; to appeal to the soul. . . . This is what women want, and they will gladly give up all the joys of all the nights of Messalina to live with a man who will lavish upon them these soul delights of which they are so fond and which cost a man nothing but a little effort.

These lines contain the greatest part of the secrets of the nuptial bed. Perhaps there may be some jokers who will take this lengthy definition of courtesy for love, while, after all, it is nothing but advice to treat your wife as you would the minister on whom depends the position you crave.

I can hear thousands of voices exclaim that this work pleads woman's cause oftener than man's;

That most women are unworthy of these delicate attentions, and that they would take advantage of them;

That there are libertine women who would not look with favor upon what they would term "mystifications";

That they are nothing but vain creatures and are always thinking of dress;

That they are sometimes strangely stubborn;

That they would become angry at an attention;

That they are silly, brainless, worthless, etc.

In reply to these clamors, we shall here inscribe a sentence, which, between two blank lines, may perhaps look like a thought, to use an expression of Beaumarchais.

LXIV

A wife is to her husband what he has made her.

To possess a true guide to a woman's sentiments, to render her her own spy, to keep oneself at the same love temperature, not to leave her, to be able to listen to her dreams, to avoid the mistakes that ruin so many marriages, are the reasons which should make the one bed system triumph over the other methods of organizing the nuptial couch.

As there is no advantage without a corresponding disadvantage, you will be compelled to slumber gracefully, to preserve your dignity under the sheets, to be courteous, to sleep lightly, not to cough unduly, and to imitate modern writers who construct more prefaces than books.

MEDITATION XVIII

CONCERNING CONJUGAL REVOLUTIONS

THERE always comes a time when nations and women, even the dullest, realize that they are being imposed upon. A very artful policy may be able to deceive for a long while; but mankind would be too lucky if the deception could always be kept up; there would be far less bloodshed among nations and among married people.

However, let us hope that the means of defense which are contained in the preceding Meditations will suffice a certain number of husbands who will thus be able to escape from the clutches of the Minotaur!

Oh! grant the doctor that more than one love secretly nurtured will perish under the strict régime of hygiene or will become dulled by marital policy. Yes (consoling error), more than one lover will be disgruntled by the personal means, more than one husband will be able to cover with an impenetrable veil the workings of his machiavellism and more than one man will succeed better than the ancient philosopher who cried: *Nolo coronari!*

But, unfortunately, we are constrained to acknowledge a sad truth. Despotism has its security and is similar to the warning of an approaching storm, which allows the traveler stretched on the parched ground to distinguish, amid the ill-omened silence, the song of a distant cricket. One fine morning, a woman discovers with an eagle eye the crafty maneuvers which have rendered her the victim of an infernal policy. At first, she is quite furious at having been virtuous so long. At what age, on what day does this terrible revolution take place? It depends entirely upon the genius of each respective husband; for we are not all called to practice the precepts of the conjugal Gospel with equal success.

“A man must love his wife very little,” cries one mystified married woman, “to put such things into practice! What! ever since the first day of our marriage, he has suspected me! It is simply monstrous; a woman would not be capable of anything like that!”

That is the theme. Each husband can imagine the variations which the character of the young Eumenides he has married will introduce therein.

A woman does not fly into a passion when she discovers this. She keeps quiet and dissimulates. Her revenge will be mysterious. However, during the crisis which we suppose you have had to pass through since your honeymoon waned, you had only her hesitations to combat; while now, you will have to struggle against a firm resolve. She has decided that she will be avenged. Henceforth, her countenance and her heart are as of bronze. Civil war will only begin the moment that an event, like the traditional drop of water that makes the cup to overflow, an event more or less grave, has rendered you odious to her. The time which must elapse between this last hour, fatal term of your congeniality and the day when your wife discovered your double-dealings is quite long enough for you to attempt a series of defensive maneuvers which we are now going to develop.

Until now, you have protected your honor by means of an entirely occult power. Henceforth, the workings of your conjugal machinery will be thoroughly exposed to view.

Where, at one time, you were only trying to prevent the crime, now you will have to strike. You began by negotiating and you end by sallying forth on your steed, with your hand on your sword, like a Parisian gendarme. You will make your mount show off, you will brandish your sword, shout at the top of your lungs and try to disperse the crowd without injuring a fly.

As the author has been compelled to find a transition to pass from the occult means to the patent ones, so is it necessary for a husband to justify the rather abrupt change in his policy; for in marriage, as well as in literature, the whole art consists in graceful transitions. For you, this is of the utmost importance. In what a dreadful position you would place yourself were your wife to complain of your conduct now, the most critical period of your whole married life!

So you must find a way of justifying the secret tyranny of your initial policy; a way which will prepare your wife's mind to the acerbity of the measures which you are going to take; a way which, far from alienating her esteem, will conciliate her; a way which will render you worthy of her forgiveness and will even invest you with a little of the glamour with which you captivated her before marriage.

"But what policy can I employ? Does such a thing exist?"

Yes.

But what skill, what tact, what art must a husband possess to display the rich acting of the treasure we are about to reveal to him! In order to play the passion which is going to save you, you will require all the depth of Talma.

This passion is *jealousy*.

"My husband is jealous of me. He was so at the very outset. . . . He concealed his feelings through excessive delicacy. So he still loves me. . . . Now I will be able to manage him! . . ."

These are the discoveries that a woman should make progressively, after the lovely scenes of comedy that you are going to play, and a man of the world would really have

to be very dull not to make a woman believe whatever flatters her.

What perfection of hypocrisy you will have to display in the co-ordination of your conduct, so as to arouse your wife's curiosity, to busy her with a new study, to make her wander in the labyrinth of your mind! . . .

Sublime actors, do you divine the diplomatic reticences, the crafty gestures, the mysterious words, the fiery glances that will some night rouse your wives to the task of trying to wring from you the secret of your passion?

Oh! to laugh in one's sleeve while making fierce eyes; not to lie and not to tell the truth; to master the mind of a woman and let her believe that she is fooling you, the while you are tightening the noose around her neck! Oh! comedy without an audience, played heart to heart, and where both of you look forward to a sure success! . . .

It will be your wife who will teach you that you are jealous, who will show you that she knows you better than you know yourself, who will prove the uselessness of your wiles and perhaps defy you. She will rejoice with rapture over the superiority which she believes she possesses over you; you raise yourself in her estimation, for she thinks that your conduct is quite natural. Only your distrust of her was useless; if she had wanted to deceive you, who could have prevented her doing it?

Then, one fine morning, passion will master you, and finding a pretext in some trifle, you will make a scene in which your wrath will disclose the extremities which you contemplate. That is the promulgation of your new code.

Do not fear that she will grow angry, for she needs your jealousy. She will even excite your anger. In the first place, she will see in it the justification of her conduct; and then she will find it extremely advantageous to play the part of a victim before the world; will she not find many delightful sympathies? Then, she will use it as a weapon against you, thereby hoping to ensnare you into some trap.

She foresees a thousand future pleasures in your jealousy and her imagination smiles at the barriers with which you surround her; will she not be compelled to overcome them?

Women possess better than we do the art of analyzing the two human sentiments which they use against us and to which they fall victims. They have the instinct of love, because, for them, love is life, and the instinct of jealousy, because it is about the only way they can govern us. With them, jealousy is genuine, it is produced by the instinct of preservation and contains the alternative of living or dying. But, with man, this almost undefinable affection is always a nonsense when he does not use it as a means to an end.

To be jealous of a woman who loves you is a strange vice of the reasoning faculty. Either we are, or we are not, loved; placed at these two extremes, jealousy is a useless sentiment for a man; it can no more be explained than fear, and perhaps it is fear in love. But it does not mean to doubt one's wife, it means to lack confidence in oneself.

To be jealous, is the climax of egotism, lack of self-conceit, and the irritation of false vanity. Women cultivate with care this ridiculous sentiment, because it means pin-money, diamonds, dresses, and because it is the thermometer of their power. Therefore, if you did not appear blinded by jealousy, your wife would be on her guard; for there is but one trap which she will not distrust and that is the trap she lays for herself.

Thus a woman should easily become the dupe of a husband clever enough to give the unavoidable revolution which takes place sooner or later in his wife, the direction which we have just indicated.

Then you will introduce into your household the strange phenomenon whose existence is shown us by the asymptotes of geometry. Your wife will forever try to minotaurize you without being able to succeed in her desire. Like the knots that are never so tight as when they are being loosened, she will work in the interest of your power, the while she believes she is working against you.

The last word in *acting* is when a prince can induce a nation to believe that he is fighting for it, when, in truth, the nation is giving up its life for him.

But a great many husbands will find an initial difficulty in carrying out this campaign plan. If the wife's dissimula-

tion is very deep, when will they be able to recognize by signs the time when she gets full knowledge of the workings of their long mystification?

In the first place, the Meditations on "Custom-House Methods" and the "Theory of the Bed," have already developed several ways of divining women's thoughts; but in this book we have not the pretension of exhausting all the resources of the human mind, which are tremendous. Here is a proof of this. The day of the Saturnalias, the Romans were able to discover more things about their slaves in ten minutes than they could learn in the whole year! You should be able to create the same festivities in your home, and imitate Gessler, who, after seeing William Tell shoot the apple off his son's head, must have thought:

"There's a man I want to get rid of, for he would not miss me if he should ever have the notion to kill me."

You understand that, if your wife wants to drink Rousillon wine, eat mutton chops, go abroad at all hours of the day, and read the Encyclopedia, you should encourage her whim to the utmost. In the first place, she will be suspicious of her own wishes, when she sees you act absolutely contrary to all your preceding systems. She will imagine that you have some interest to reverse your policy and therefore, whatever freedom you grant her will trouble her so that she will fail to enjoy it. As for the misfortunes that this change may bring about, the future will take care of them. In a revolution, the first of all principles is to *direct* the evil which one is powerless to *control*, and to attract thunder by lightning rods in order to conduct it into a well.

The last act of the comedy is in preparation.

The lover who, from the time that the slightest of the *first symptoms* made its appearance in your wife, until the moment when the "conjugal revolution" takes place, has hovered in the background, either as a material or an immaterial figure, the *lover*, to whom she beckons, says: "Here I am."

MEDITATION XIX

CONCERNING THE LOVER

WE offer the following maxims for your meditation.

We might well despair of the human race if they had only been made in 1830; but they establish so categorically the links and the dissimilarities which exist between you, your wife and her lover; they should trace your policy so clearly and lay bare the forces of the enemy to such an extent, that the *magister* has put aside all self-conceit; and if, by chance, there should be one new thought among them, credit it to the Devil who has counseled this work.

LXV

To speak of love is to make love.

LXVI

In a lover, the most vulgar desire always produces itself as if it were the impulse of conscientious admiration.

LXVII

A lover has all the qualities and faults that a husband has not.

LXVIII

Not only does a lover put life into everything, but he also makes a woman forget life; a husband never puts life into anything.

LXIX

A lover is always misled by a woman's protestations of affection; there where a husband shrugs his shoulders, a lover is in ecstasy.

LXX

A lover only shows by his manner the degree of intimacy he has reached with a married woman.

LXXI

A woman does not always know why she loves. It is rare when a man has not some ax to grind. A husband should try to find out this secret reason, for, to him, it would be the lever of Archimedes.

LXXII

A talented husband should never suppose openly that his wife has a lover.

LXXIII

A lover will obey all the whims of a woman; and as a man is never vile in the arms of his mistress, he will often use, to please her, methods that are repulsive to a husband.

LXXIV

A lover teaches a woman everything her husband has carefully concealed from her.

LXXV

All the sensations a woman gives her lover she exchanges; they always come back to her intensified; they are as rich from what they have given as from what they have received. It is a business in which almost all husbands end by becoming bankrupts.

LXXVI

A lover speaks to a woman only of that which makes her more attractive; while a husband, even when he is loving, cannot help giving advice that always resembles blame.

LXXVII

A lover always proceeds from his mistress to himself; while it is always the contrary with a husband.

LXXVIII

A lover has always the wish to appear pleasant; there is a principle of exaggeration in this sentiment that leads to ridicule; a husband should know how to take advantage of this.

LXXIX

When a crime has been committed, the instructing magistrate knows (excepting in the case of a freed convict who commits murder in the penitentiary) that there are not more than five hundred persons to whom he can attribute the crime. He starts to establish his conjectures from this. A husband should reason like this judge: there are not more than three people in society on whom he can fasten the guilt when he wishes to look for his wife's lover.

LXXX

A lover is never in the wrong.

LXXXI

The lover of a married woman says to her: "Madame, you need rest. You have given a virtuous example to your children. You have sworn to make your husband happy and he, barring a few slight faults (and I have more than he has), is worthy of your esteem. Well, you must sacrifice your life and your family for me, because I have noticed that you have a shapely limb. Not a murmur must escape you; for a regret is an offense that I would punish by a penalty far worse than the law against adulterous wives. As a reward for all these sacrifices, I will give you as much delight as sorrow." Unbelievable thing, the lover triumphs! The form of his speech makes everything pass. He never says but one word: "I love you!" A lover is the herald who proclaims a woman's worth, beauty or wit. What does a husband proclaim?

After all has been said, the love a married woman inspires, or feels, is the least flattering of all sentiments; with her, it is nothing but tremendous conceit; with her lover, it is egotism. The lover of a married woman contracts too many obligations for three men in a century to deign discharge them; he should devote his whole life to his mistress, whom, in the end, he always forsakes; both know this and ever since the world began, the woman has always been as sublime as the man has been ungrateful. A great passion some-

times excites the pity of the judges who condemn it; but where can one find genuine and lasting passions? What power must a husband have to combat successfully a man whose influence leads a woman to submit to such misfortunes?

We believe that, as a general rule, a husband can, by cleverly applying the means of defense which we have brought forward, bring his wife to the age of twenty-seven, not without her having chosen a lover, but without having had her commit the great crime. Here and there one meets with men who, endowed with great conjugal genius, are able to keep their wives to themselves, body and soul, until they are thirty or thirty-five years old; but these exceptions cause a sort of scandal and fear. This phenomenon hardly ever happens outside of the provinces, where life is transparent and people live in glass houses. Then a man is armed with immense power. This marvelous aid which is given a husband by men and circumstances, always vanishes in the midst of a city whose population amounts to two hundred thousand souls.

Therefore, it can be said that thirty is the age of virtue. At this critical period, a woman becomes so hard to watch that, in order to keep her within the gates of the conjugal paradise, one has to resort to the last means of defense which remain, and which will be divulged by the "Essay on Police Methods," the "Art of Coming Home Unexpectedly," and "The Peripitias."

MEDITATION XX

ESSAY ON POLICE METHODS

CONJUGAL police methods comprise all the means given you by the laws, the customs, force and craftiness to prevent your wife from accomplishing the three things which constitute, in a way, the life of love: writing, seeing her lover, and speaking to him.

These methods are to be more or less combined with several of the means of defense contained in the preceding

Meditations. Instinct alone can tell you in what proportion and under what circumstances these various elements should be used. The whole system is elastic; a clever husband will easily know how it can be bent, stretched and tightened to suit different occasions. With the help of this system, a man can bring his wife to the age of forty without ever having had her go astray.

We will divide this treaty into five paragraphs:

1. Mouse-Traps.
2. Correspondence.
3. Spies.
4. Index.
5. The Budget.

I.—Mouse-Traps

In spite of the gravity of the crisis that balks a husband, we do not suppose that the lover has gained entire "freedom of the city" in the conjugal fastness. Often a husband has a suspicion that his wife entertains a lover, but cannot tell on which of the five or six elect to fasten his suspicions. This hesitancy must spring from some moral infirmity, to which we must bring aid.

Fouché had three or four houses in Paris where the best people were entertained and whose hostesses were devoted to him. Their devotion cost the State a round sum of money. The minister called these societies, which excited no one's suspicion at the time, his *souricières*. More than one arrest was brought about after a ball where the most brilliant Parisian society had been the accomplice of the oratorian.

The art of offering crumbs of roasted chestnuts to see a woman put out her white fingers to grasp them is very limited, for a woman is surely on her guard; however, we have at least three sorts of traps: the *Irresistible*, the *Fallacious* and the *Spring-Trap*.

The Irresistible Trap

We will suppose that two husbands, whom we will name A and B, desire to find out who their wives' lovers are. We shall put husband A in the center of a table covered

with fruit, cut glass and various cordials, and husband B can be wherever you wish to place him at this festive board. Champagne has been passed, all eyes are alight and all tongues are wagging.

Husband A, *peeling a chestnut*: "Well, I admire literary men, but at a distance; I think that they are insufferable; their conversation is tyrannical; I don't know which are the most obnoxious, their faults or their qualities, for it would really seem that intellectual superiority only serves to bring out their faults and their qualities. In a word,—(*he swallows the chestnut*)—men of genius are elixirs, if you like, but they should be used with discretion."

Wife B, *who has been very attentive*: "But, Monsieur A, you are really hard to please! (*She smiles maliciously.*) I think that fools have just as many faults as talented people, with the only difference that they do not know how to have them forgiven! . . ."

Husband A, *hurt*: "You will admit, madame, that they are not very gallant with women. . . ."

Wife B, *quickly*: "Who told you so?"

Husband A, *smiling*: "Don't they crush you at all times under the weight of their superiority? Vanity is so overpowering in them that between them and you it must be a continual struggle for supremacy."

The Hostess, *aside to the wife*: "You got what you deserved, my dear." (*Wife A shrugs her shoulders.*)

Husband A, *pursuing the theme*: "And then the habit they have in combining their ideas, reveals to them the mechanism of sentiment so that, for them, love is merely physical and everybody knows that they don't shine. . . ."

Wife B, *pursing her lips and interrupting*: "It seems to me, sir, that we are the best judges of that. But I can readily understand that society people do not care for literary folk! Believe me, it is easier for you to criticise, than it would be for you to imitate them."

Husband A, *scornfully*: "Oh! madame, we can attack the authors of the day without being accused of jealousy. There is one man in society now who, if he wanted to write——"

Wife B, *hotly*: "Unfortunately, monsieur, some of your friends at the Chamber have written novels; have you been able to read them? . . . But really, nowadays it is necessary to make historical researches for the smallest subject, one must——"

Husband B, *turning from his partner, aside*: "Oh! oh! is it perhaps Monsieur de L—— (author of *A Young Girl's Dreams*), whom my wife is in love with? . . . That is strange, I thought it was Doctor M——. We'll see. . . . (*Aloud.*) Do you know, my dear, that you are quite right in what you have just said? (*Everybody laughs.*) Really, I should always prefer to entertain artists and literary men (*Aside*: When we entertain!) than the other professions. Artists at least talk of things that everyone can understand; for, who is the mortal who does not think he has taste? But judges, lawyers and especially doctors. . . . ah! I admit that to hear them always discoursing about lawsuits and diseases, the two human infirmities that——"

Wife B, *stopping her conversation with her neighbor in order to answer her husband*: "Ah! doctors are horrid!"

Wife A, *who sits near Husband B, speaking at the same time*: "Why! what are you saying? . . . You are strangely mistaken. To-day, nobody wants to appear what he is: doctors, as long as you are speaking about them, always try to avoid the subject of their profession. They talk politics, fashions, plays, they relate and write books better even than professional authors; a modern physician is very far removed from the doctors of Molière. . . ."

Husband A, *aside*: "My! is my wife in love with Doctor M——? That is strange. (*Aloud.*) That is possible, my dear, but I would not care to have my dog treated by one of those literary doctors."

Wife A, *interrupting her husband*: "That is unjust; I know of people who have five or six positions and in whom the Government seems to have confidence; at any rate, Monsieur A, it is odd that you should speak in this manner, you who think so much of Doctor M——."

Husband A, *aside*: "It is certain!"

The Fallacious Trap

A Husband, *coming home*: "My dear, we are invited by Madame de Fischtaminel to attend the concert she is going to give next Tuesday. I thought we might go, for I wanted to talk to the young cousin of the minister, who was invited to sing; but he has gone to visit his aunt at Frouville; what are you going to do?"

The Wife: "I just hate concerts! . . . One has to sit on a chair for hours without saying a word. . . . Besides, you know that we have dinner with my mother that night and that we cannot miss congratulating her for her birthday."

The Husband, *carelessly*: "Ah! that's true."

(*Three days later.*)

The Husband, *who is about to retire*: "Do you know, pet, I shall have to leave you at your mother's, because the Count has returned from Frouville and will be at Madame de Fischtaminel's."

The Wife, *quickly*: "But why should you go there alone? You know I love music!"

The Spring-Trap

The Wife: "What makes you go out so early this evening?"

The Husband, *mysteriously*: "Ah! it is for something so disagreeable that I do not know what to do!"

The Wife: "Why! what is it, Adolph? You are a monster if you don't tell me what you are going to do."

The Husband: "My dear, that fool of a Prosper Magnan is to have a duel with Monsieur de Fontanges on account of some dancer at the Opera. . . . Why! what's the matter? . . ."

The Wife: "Nothing. . . . It is very warm in here. I really don't know what it is . . . but all day long I have been so red. . . ."

The Husband, *aside*: "She loves Monsieur de Fontanges! (*Aloud.*) Célestine! (*He shouts.*) Célestine, come quick, madame is going to faint! . . ."

You understand that a clever husband should find a thousand different ways of setting these three traps.

II.—Correspondence

To write a letter and to have it posted; to receive the reply, to read and to burn it; this is correspondence reduced to its simplest expression.

However, note what tremendous facilities civilization, our customs and love have put in woman's reach in order to allow her to have these material acts escape matrimonial vigilance.

The letter-box that yawns at each passer-by receives contributions from all hands.

Then there is the fatal invention of the *poste restante*.

A lover finds a score of charitably inclined persons throughout the world, masculine and feminine, who, in the hope of calling upon him some day for the same purpose, will slide the *billet-doux* into the loving hand of his fair mistress.

Correspondence is a perfect Proteus. There are sympathetic inks and a young bachelor once confided to us that he had written a letter on the inside page of a new book which the husband of his love had ordered at a publisher's and that it actually reached his mistress, who had been notified the day before of the adorable subterfuge.

An enamored woman will write and read her *billets-doux* during the time she is engaged in those mysterious operations when even the most tyrannical husband is compelled to leave her at liberty.

Finally, all lovers possess the art of creating a special telegraphy whose particular signs are very hard to understand. At a ball, a flower may be worn in a certain manner; at the play, sometimes a handkerchief is spread on the sill of the box; the peculiar color of a belt, a hat that is put on or removed, a gown that is worn in preference to another one, a song sung at a concert or a certain tune played on the piano; a glance directed toward a certain spot, and prearranged, everything, from a street-organ that passes beneath your window and vanishes as soon as anyone opens a shutter, to the advertised sale of a horse in the papers, and even *yourself*, will be used as correspondence.

Indeed, how many times has not an artful wife requested her husband to go on an errand for her, to such and such a shop, and notified her lover that the presence of her lord and master meant either *yes* or *no* ?

Here, the professor admits, much to his shame, that there are no means of preventing two lovers from corresponding. But matrimonial machiavellism is stronger through this very powerlessness than it could be through coercive means.

A convention which should remain sacred to the couple is the one by which they swear to each other never to open their respective correspondence. He is a clever husband who consecrates this principle as soon as he is married and conscientiously adheres to it.

By giving a woman unlimited freedom to write and receive letters, you reserve the privilege of knowing the exact moment when she begins to correspond with her lover.

But, even supposing your wife should be suspicious of you, and should conceal her correspondence with all possible care, is it not the best time for displaying that intellectual power which we gave you in the Meditation on "Custom-House Methods" ? The man who cannot tell when his wife has written her lover or when she has received his reply, is an incomplete husband.

The profound study that you should make of the movements, actions, gestures and glances of your wife will perhaps be painful, but it will not last very long; for you need only find out when and how your wife and her lover correspond.

We cannot believe that a husband even of only moderate intelligence would not be able to divine this feminine maneuver when he suspects that it is taking place.

Now, judge by one adventure how many means of detection and repression correspondence offers you.

A young lawyer, whose frenzied passion revealed to him some of the principles of this important part of our work, had married a young person who loved him in a lukewarm fashion (for which he was surpassingly thankful); at the end of one year of marriage, however, he discovered that

his dear Anna (her name was Anna) loved the head-clerk of a stockbroker.

Adolph was a young man of five-and-twenty, rather good-looking, and fond of pleasure, like all bachelors. He was economical, neat, kind-hearted, a good horseman, a witty conversationalist, and very fastidious about his personal appearance and dress. In short, he would have done honor to a duchess. The lawyer was ugly, small, squatty, and a husband. Anna, tall and fair, had white skin, fine eyes and beautiful features. She was all love, and passion gave her a magical expression. She belonged to a poor family, while *Maître* Lebrun had an income of twelve thousand francs a year. Everything is explained. One evening, Lebrun came home in an evidently depressed mood. He went into his study to work, but almost immediately returned to his wife's room with chattering teeth; for he had fever. After a little while, he went to bed. There he began to groan and pity his clients, especially a poor widow whose fortune he was, the very next day, going to save by some judicial transaction. The appointment had been made and would have to be broken. After he had dozed for a short time, he awoke and in a weak voice requested his wife to write a note to one of his most intimate friends asking him to take his place in the coming meeting. He dictated a long letter, following with his eyes the space that his sentences took on the paper. When the wife was about to turn the page of the second sheet he was just explaining to his lawyer friend what pleasure his client would have if the transaction was signed, and the fatal page began with these words:

“My good friend, hasten, ah! hasten at once to Madame de Vernon; you are impatiently awaited. She lives at No. 7 Rue du Sentier. Forgive me for saying so little; but I count on your wonderful sense to divine what I cannot explain.

“Faithfully yours.”

“Give me the letter,” said the lawyer, “so that I can read it over before signing it.”

The unhappy woman, whose prudence had been lulled by the nature of the letter, which was filled with the most barbarous legal terms, handed the epistle to her husband. As soon as he had it in his possession, he began to writhe and moan and requested his wife to perform some service for him. She left the room to go about the errand. Then the lawyer jumped out of bed, grabbed a piece of paper, folded it like a letter and concealed the original missive. When Anna returned, her husband sealed the factitious bit of paper, had her write the address of the friend to whom it was supposed to be sent and hand it to a servant. Lebrun then seemed to grow calmer; he went to sleep or feigned sleep, and the following morning still complained of various pains. Two days later, he tore up the first sheet of the letter, carefully folded the decoy note, sealed it, stepped out of the conjugal bedroom, called his wife's maid and said to her:

"Madame wishes you to take this to Monsieur Adolph as quick as you can. . . ."

He waited to see the girl depart and then immediately went to the Rue du Sentier, to the indicated address. He patiently awaited his rival in the rooms of the friend who had lent him aid in the matter. The lover, intoxicated with bliss, arrives and asks for Madame de Vernon; he is shown in and finds himself face to face with *Maître* Lebrun, whose face is pale and cold and whose calm eyes show his unshaken determination.

"Monsieur," said he to the young clerk, whose heart began to beat wildly, "you love my wife and are trying to win her; I cannot blame you, since in your place and at your age, I should have done the same thing. But Anna is in despair; you have wrecked her happiness, hell is in her heart; she has confided everything to me. A quarrel which we soon made up drove her to write you the letter you received, and she has sent me to meet you instead of coming herself. I will not even mention that by persisting in your plans you would bring about the misfortune of the woman you love, that you would deprive her of my respect, and later on of your own, that your crime would

be felt in the future by affecting my children; I will not even speak of my own wrecked happiness; it would be useless! . . . But I will tell you, sir, that the slightest attempt on your part would be the signal for a crime; for I would not take the chance of a duel to run you through!"

At this point the eyes of the lawyer distilled death.

"Eh! monsieur," he resumed in a gentler tone, "you are young and you are generous; make a sacrifice for the future happiness of the woman you love; forsake her, never see her again. And if you are absolutely determined to get a member of the family, I have a young aunt who has never married; she is charming, clever and wealthy; undertake her conversion and leave a good wife alone." The mixture of jesting and terror, the eyes and voice of the husband made a deep impression on the lover. For a minute or two he remained speechless, like all passionate people whom a violent shock deprives of their presence of mind. If Anna ever had a lover (a pure hypothesis), it certainly was never Adolph.

This account may serve to show you that correspondence is a two-edged dagger, which is as useful to the husband as it is to the wife. Therefore, you should favor it, for the same reason that Monsieur le Préfet de Police is careful to have the lamps of Paris lit every night.

III.—Spies

To lower oneself to beg for revelations from one's servants, and to fall lower than them by paying them for their information, is not a crime; it may be a cowardly act, but it is certainly a foolish one; for nothing guarantees the uprightness of a servant who betrays his mistress and you will never know whether he is devoted to your interests or to your wife's. Therefore, this matter should be considered judged for all time.

Nature, this tender and loving relative, has placed near the mother of a family the surest and best spies in the world. They can speak, but they are silent, they see everything and seem to be sightless.

One day, a friend of mine met me on the boulevard and invited me to dine with him at his home. We went there

together. Dinner was in progress and the hostess was ladling out the soup to her two little girls.

"Here are some *first symptoms*," said I to myself.

We sat down at the board. The first thing the husband (an artless man and one who only talked to break silence) uttered was:

"Has anyone been here to-day?"

"Not a soul!" replied his wife without looking up.

I shall never forget the quick way in which the two little girls glanced at their mother. The oldest one, especially, had a strange look in her eyes. There was mystery and revelation, curiosity and silence, astonishment and security in it. If anything could be compared to the rapidity with which that candid look shot out of their eyes, it was the prudence with which they immediately lowered their lids.

Gentle and charming creatures, who, from the age of nine until womanhood, are often the plagues of your mother, even when she is not coquettish, is it through privilege or through instinct that your young ears catch the slightest sound of a man's voice behind walls and doors, that your eyes take in everything, that your young minds try to understand everything, even the meaning of a thoughtless word, even that of your mother's slightest gesture?

There is gratitude and something instinctive in the preference of fathers for their daughters and mothers for their sons.

But the art of instituting material spies is child's play, and nothing is easier than to find something better than what was devised by the beadle who placed eggshells in his bed and got no other expression of sympathy from his bewildered crony than: "You would not have ground them so finely."

The Maréchal de Saxe hardly gave more sympathy to La Popelinière when they both discovered that famous corkscrew chimney invented by the Duc de Richelieu:

"This is the finest device for making cuckolds of husbands, that I have ever seen!" exclaimed the hero of Fontenoy.

Let us hope that your spying will not reveal anything

so annoying. Those calamities are the fruits of civil war, and we have not arrived at that.

IV.—*The Index*

The Pope only condemns books; but you should mark men and things with the seal of your disapproval.

Madame is forbidden to take her baths anywhere but in her own home.

Madame is forbidden to receive the man you think is her lover, and all the people who might take an interest in her love affair.

Madame is forbidden to go abroad without her lord and master.

But the oddities which are the outcome of the diversity of characters, the innumerable incidents of passion, and the habits of the various couples, bring about so many changes in this *Livre noir*, they multiply or efface the lines with such rapidity, that a friend of the author called this index the "History of the Variations of the Conjugal Church."

There are only two things amenable to fixed rules: the country and the promenade.

A husband should never encourage, or allow, his wife to go to the country. You may have a country-seat, you may live there and receive nothing but old men and women, but never leave your wife alone. But to take her, if only for a day, to visit someone else. . . . Why, if you do this you are more imprudent than an ostrich.

It is already a very difficult task to keep your eye on your wife when she is in the country. Can you be in all the paths, all the trees, can you follow the footsteps of a lover on the grass at night, when in the morning all traces are effaced by the sun and dew? Will you be able to notice every break in your wall? Oh! the country and Springtime! . . . they are the two right arms of celibacy.

When a woman reaches the crisis which we suppose she has attained, a husband should remain in town until the war has broken out or devote himself to the pleasures of a fierce spying business.

As for the promenade, does madame wish to go to the theater, to balls, to the Bois de Boulogne? to go out to make purchases and see the styles? Madame will have to go, will have to see, in the company of her honorable lord and master.

If she should choose the time when some occupation which you could not possibly shirk claims you, in order to wring from you the tacit adhesion to some outing she had planned beforehand, if, in order to obtain her wish, she displayed all the fascinations in which women excel and the fertile resources of which you ought to divine, the professor advises you to let yourself be inveigled and to sell dearly the desired permission and especially to convince this creature whose soul is as mobile as water and as firm as steel, that you are absolutely detained by the business on hand and will not be able to leave your study.

But, as soon as your wife has set her foot out of the house, do not give her time to walk fifty paces; rush after her and do not let her know that you are following her.

There may be some Werthers whose tender and delicate souls rebel at this inquisition. This conduct is no more unworthy than that of an owner who arises in the night and looks out of the window to see that thieves are not looting his orchard. Perhaps you will be able to obtain, before the commission of the crime, some exact information concerning the location of the apartments which so many lovers rent in town under assumed names. If, by chance (may God keep you from it), your wife should enter one of these suspicious places, find out whether the house has several exits.

Does your wife jump into a *fiacre*? . . . What are you afraid of? Has not a *préfet de police*, to whom a gold crown should have been given by husbands, invented a little shack in which sits enthroned, his register in hand, an incorruptible guardian of public morality? Does not every one know the destination of these Parisian gondolas?

If, during an absence, your wife went out in spite of your orders, and avers that she visited such and such a

shop, you should go to the place the next day and endeavor to find out whether she has told you the truth.

But passion, better than this Meditation, will tell you what to do and dictate to you the resources of conjugal tyranny; we shall therefore end these fastidious instructions.

V.—The Budget

While outlining the picture of a valid husband (See the Meditation on "Predestinated Husbands"), we carefully enjoined him to conceal from his wife the true amount of his income.

While we rely on this basis to establish our financial system, we hope to contribute in overthrowing the opinion which is quite universal, that it is not a good thing to let one's wife handle one's money. This principle is one of the popular errors which produce the most ill-feeling in a household.

But first we will consider the heart question before the income question.

Making a little list for your wife and your household expenses, and giving her an allowance like you would dole out a contribution, so much every month, contains something petty and small which could not be countenanced by any but the most sordid and distrustful souls. By acting in this fashion, you will reap a great many sorrows.

I will believe that during the first years of your married life, more or less pretty scenes, clever speeches and caresses went hand in hand with the monthly gift; but a time will come when the thoughtlessness of your wife, an unforeseen extravagance will compel her to seek a loan of the Chamber; I suppose that you always grant the bill; and that without much discussion, which is not the habit of our unfaithful deputies. They pay but they grumble; you pay and add a compliment; very well!

But in the present crisis, the provisions of the annual budget do not suffice. There is an increase of bonnets, shawls and frocks; there is added expense necessitated by the congresses, the diplomatic messengers, the ways and means of love, though the income remains the same. Then

begins the most odious and dreadful education that a woman can receive. I know but a few noble and generous souls who prize purity of heart and frankness of soul far above millions, and who would forgive a passion much quicker than they would forgive a lie, whose instinctive delicacy has divined the principle of this gangrene of the soul, this last degree of human corruption.

Then, indeed, do love scenes of the most enchanting kind take place between a married couple. Then, a woman becomes supple; and, similar to the brightest chord of a harp thrown into the fire, she twists and twines herself around you; she yields to your every whim; everything she says is full of tenderness; she sells her sweet words and ends by falling lower than a dancing-girl, for she prostitutes herself to her husband. In her most loving kisses is the flavor of money; in all her speeches is the sound of money; she grows hardened. The suavest, craftiest usurer does not estimate better at a glance the metallic worth of a spendthrift to whom he lends money than your wife appraises one of your desires, by skipping from branch to branch like a squirrel in order to increase the price by the increase in appetite. And do not for a moment believe that you will be able to escape her fascination. Nature has provided stores of wiles for women, and society has increased them tenfold by fashions.

"If I ever marry," one of the most honorable generals of our old armies used to say, "I shall not put a sou into the *corbeille*."

"What will you put into it, General?" inquired a young girl.

"The key of my strong-box."

The young lady smiled her approbation. She swayed her little head with a motion similar to that of a magnetized needle; she tilted her chin as if to say:

"I would be glad to marry the General in spite of his forty-odd years."

But, as a question of money, what interest do you expect a woman to take in an arrangement where she is paid like a bookkeeper?

Examine the other system.

By letting your wife, under the guise of absolute trust, have the control of two-thirds of your fortune, and allowing her to manage the household machinery as she sees fit, you will reap an esteem that nothing will ever forfeit, for nobility of soul and trust find powerful echoes in a woman's breast. Madame will be burdened with a responsibility which will be the greater check to possible dissipation because she will have created it herself in her heart. In the first place, you have made allowance for any emergency and then you are sure that your wife may perhaps never degrade herself.

Now, by looking for means of defense through this system, you must consider what wonderful resources this financial plan offers.

In fact, during the first years of married life, your wife will pride herself upon her ability to provide you with satisfaction and luxury for your money.

She will set an opulent table, renew the furnishings of the house and the carriages; and she will always have a sum of money hidden away in a drawer for her beloved one. Well, under the present circumstances, the drawer will often be empty, and monsieur will spend a great deal more than he should. The economies recommended by the Chamber only affect the small-salaried clerks; now, you are the petty clerk of your household. But it will not worry you, since you will have accumulated, capitalized and managed the third of your fortune for a long time; you will be like Louis XV. who created a little separate treasure for himself, "in case of misfortune," as he used to say.

So, when your wife speaks of economy, her words will be like the variations of the stock-exchange. You will be able to note the lover's progress by the financial fluctuations and everything will be conciliated. *E sempre bene.*

If your wife fails to appreciate the trust and squanders a large part of the fortune, it will be hard for her, in the first place, to reach the third of the income which you have managed for ten years; and then, the Meditation on "Peripitias" will teach you that, in the crisis brought on by

your wife's extravagance, there are tremendous resources for routing the Minotaur.

Lastly, the knowledge of the treasure you have accumulated by your efforts must remain a secret until your death; and if you should be compelled to call upon it to aid your wife, you must always make her believe that you won the money gambling or that it was lent you by a friend.

These are the true principles of conjugal finance.

Conjugal policy has its list of martyrs. We shall only quote one instance, because it may show the necessity for husbands who use such strenuous methods, of guarding against themselves as well as their wives.

An old miser who lived in T——, a pleasure-loving city if there ever was one, had married a young and pretty girl, and he was so much in love with her and so jealous, that affection triumphed over avarice; for he gave up his business in order to look after his wife, and thereby only changed the form of his passion. I acknowledge that I owe the greater part of the observations contained in this essay, which no doubt is still imperfect, to the person who was enabled to study this admirable conjugal phenomenon; and in order to picture him, we shall have need of but one line. Before retiring, in the country, that husband would always rake the paths of his park in a peculiar way, and he had a special rake for the gravel on his terraces. He had made a special study of the footprints of the various people of his household; and every morning he went to reconnoiter.

"All the trees stand far apart," he said to the person I have referred to, "because one cannot see anything where there are bushes. . . ."

His wife was in love with one of the most fascinating men of the town. For nine years this passion had lived in the hearts of the two lovers, who had become enamored on first sight, at a ball; that night, as they danced together, their fingers told each the story of the other's passion. Since that day they had been happy in the thousand little things that more fortunate lovers would have scorned. One day, the young man took his only confidant into his study and showed

him a table on which he kept under glass, with more care than he would have bestowed on the finest gems in the world, flowers that had fallen from his lady-love's hair, and twigs that her dress had brushed as she walked in her garden. He even showed him a footprint on soft earth.

"I could hear the palpitations of his heart," the confidant told me afterwards as we stood and gazed upon the treasures of this love museum. I raised my eyes to the ceiling, as if to confide to Heaven something that I did not dare to express. "Poor humanity!" I mused. "Madame de —— told me that one night you had been found almost unconscious in one of the gaming parlors?" I said.

"I should say so," he remarked, trying to hide the fire of his glance; "I had kissed her arm! . . . But," he added, wringing my hand and throwing me one of those looks that seem to penetrate the heart, "her husband is very ill from gout. . . ."

Some time after that conversation, the old man improved and seemed to take a new lease on life; but, in the midst of his convalescence, he took to his bed one day and died very suddenly. Symptoms of poisoning were so apparent that the law got wind of the matter and the two lovers were arrested. Then happened in court the most awful scene that ever took place before a jury. In the beginning of the trial, each of the two admitted his guilt, with the sole purpose of saving the other implicated person. The trial was nothing but a series of mutual denials prompted by the wild devotion of love. For the first time they were together, but they were seated on the criminal's bench and separated by a gendarme. They were pronounced guilty by all the weeping jury. Nobody among those who had the barbarous courage to see them executed can speak of them to-day without a tremor. Religion had caused them to repent the crime, but not to abjure their love. The guillotine was their nuptial couch and they lay there side by side in Death's long sleep.

MEDITATION XXI

THE ART OF COMING HOME UNEXPECTEDLY

INCAPABLE of mastering the fury of his anxiety, more than one husband has made the mistake of coming home and entering his wife's apartments to rejoice over her weakness, like the Spanish bulls which, excited by red *banderillos*, gore horses and matadors, picadors, toreadors and consorts.

Oh! to come home in a gentle and fearsome way like Mascarille, who expected a beating, and then to change and become cheerful when you see that your master is in fine humor! . . . that is acting like a wise man.

"Yes, my dear, I know that during my absence you had every opportunity of doing what you should not do. . . . Another woman might have upset the whole house while you only broke a window-pane! May God bless you for your mercy. Always act like this and you will be sure of my gratitude."

Those are the thoughts that your face and manner should betray. But, aside, you say to yourself:

"Perhaps he has been here! . . ."

To always be cheerful at home is a law which suffers no exception.

But the art of going out only to return when you have scented a conspiracy, the art of coming home *à propos!* . . . ah! these are things which cannot possibly be taught by formulas. It is all a matter of tact and craftiness. The events of life are always more fertile than human imagination. Therefore, we shall content ourselves by endowing this book with a story worthy of being inscribed in the archives of the monastery of Thélème. It will have the tremendous merit of revealing to you a new mode of defense lightly indicated by one of the professor's aphorisms, and to put into action the moral of the present Meditation, which is the only way to teach you.

Monsieur de B——, who was an officer and who, for the

time being, was secretary of Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland, was at the château de Saint-Leu, where Queen Hortense was holding court with all her ladies-in-waiting. The young officer was good-looking and fair; he was a trifle supercilious and seemed to be much impressed with the military prestige; besides he was quite clever and very gallant. Why did all these attractions become odious to all the Queen's attendants? We are not told. Perhaps he made the mistake of being attentive to all the ladies! Exactly. But it was craftiness on his part. He adored at the time Madame la Comtesse de ——. The Countess did not dare take her lover's part, because she would thereby have revealed her secret and with strange perversity she said the most cruel things about the young officer while in her heart she cherished him.

There is a class of women with whom well-dressed and fastidious men can become very popular. These women are the refined and delicately sensitive ones. The Countess was one of these women. She belonged to the N—— family, in which good manners were traditional. Her husband, the Comte de —— was the son of the old Duchesse de L——, and he had bowed his head before the idol of the hour: Napoleon having recently ennobled him, he flattered himself that he would obtain an embassy; but, in the meantime, he was satisfied to be a Lord Chamberlain; and if he allowed his wife to be with Queen Hortense it was probably on account of ambition.

"My son," his mother said to him one morning, "your wife loves Monsieur de B——."

"You are joking, mother, he borrowed a hundred napoleons of me yesterday."

"If you are as careless of your wife as you are of your money, there is nothing more to be said," remarked the old lady dryly.

The future ambassador watched the two lovers and it was while playing billiards with the Queen, the officer, and his wife, that he obtained one of those proofs as slight in appearance as they are conclusive to the trained eye of a diplomat.

“They have gone farther than they are aware of,” the Count said to his mother.

And he poured into the wise and crafty soul of the old Duchess the great sorrow that this discovery had caused him. He loved his wife, and she, without being burdened with what are commonly called principles, had been married too short a while to be callous regarding her duty. The Duchess took it upon herself to fathom the heart of her daughter-in-law. She thought that there was still hope for this young and refined soul and she promised her son to ruin Monsieur de B—— for all time. One evening, after the game had been played, and all the ladies were engaged in one of those chats which flavor of gossip, and the Countess was occupied with the Queen, Madame de L—— seized the opportunity to tell the whole gathering of the love that Monsieur de B—— bore her daughter-in-law. General indignation. The Duchess having gotten all the voices, it was decided unanimously that the woman who could succeed in ridding the château of the officer would be doing a favor to the Queen, who could not tolerate him, and to all the other women who hated him for a good cause. The old lady solicited the co-operation of the fair conspirators and everyone promised to aid in anything that might be undertaken. In forty-eight hours the crafty old dame became the confidante of her daughter-in-law as well as of the lover. Three days later she led the young officer to believe that he might hope for a *tête-à-tête* with his idol after lunch. It was arranged that Monsieur de B—— should go to Paris early in the day, and return secretly. The Queen had announced that she and her suite were to follow a hunt and the Countess was to plead sickness. The Count, having been sent to Paris by King Louis, did not worry them. In order to conceive of all the perfidy of the Duchess's plan, we shall have to explain in a few words the topography of the tiny apartment that the Countess occupied. It was located on the first floor of the château, above the Queen's rooms and at the end of a long hall. On entering, one found oneself immediately in a bedchamber, which opened on the right and on the left into smaller rooms. The room on the right

was fitted up as a *cabinet de toilette*, and the one on the left had been recently arranged as a boudoir. Everyone knows the size of such rooms. This one was nothing but four walls. It was hung in some grayish material and only contained a carpet and a small divan; for it was not as yet completely furnished. The plan of the Duchess embodied these details which, though to all appearances slight, still served her purpose well. At about eleven o'clock a delicious lunch is served. The officer, on his way from Paris, was riding as fast as he could. At last, he reaches the château, hands his horse over to a groom, climbs the wall of the park and reaches the room of his lady-love without having been seen by a soul. In those times, if you do not remember it, officers wore very tight breeches and long and narrow *schakos*, a costume that is very handsome when on review, but which is distinctly uncomfortable for a *rendez-vous*. The old lady had counted on the hindrance of the uniform. The lunch was a great success. Neither the Countess nor her mother touched wine, but the officer, who was familiar with the proverb, drank as much champagne as was necessary to quicken his love and his wits. When the meal was over, the officer glanced at the mother-in-law who, in her rôle of accomplice said:

"I believe that I hear a carriage! . . ."

And she left the room. After three minutes she returned.

"It is the Count!" she cried, pushing the two lovers into the boudoir.

"Never fear," she said. "Take your *schako*," she admonished the imprudent young man.

She quickly shoved the table into the smaller room and set about putting the bedchamber to rights so that when her son arrived on the scene no trace of a lunch was in evidence.

"Is my wife ill?" asked the Count.

"No, *mon ami*," replied his mother. "She recovered quickly from her spell; she has joined the hunt, I believe."

Then she nodded her head in the direction of the boudoir as if to say: "They are in there. . . ."

"But you must be crazy," replied the Count in a low tone, "to lock them in there together!"

"You have nothing to fear," retorted the Duchess, "I put something in his wine. . . ."

"What?"

"The quickest of all physics."

Enter the King of Holland. He came to ask the Count about the result of the mission he had intrusted to him. The Duchess with some of the mysterious words that women know so well how to use, induced His Majesty to carry the Count off with him.

As soon as the lovers found themselves in the boudoir, the Countess, amazed at recognizing her husband's voice, said to the captivating officer:

"Ah! sir, you see what I have risked for you. . . ."

"But, dear Marie, my love will reward you for all these sacrifices and I shall be true to you until death." (*Aside, to himself*): "Oh! what a pain . . ."

"Ah!" exclaimed the young woman, wringing her hands as she heard her husband's footsteps nearing the door of the boudoir, "no love can compensate for such trials! . . . Sir, do not touch me! . . ."

"Oh! my love, my treasure," said he, kneeling before her with respect, "I will be whatever you want me to be! . . . Command me . . . I will depart from you. Call me back . . . I will come. I will be the most submissive as well as the most . . . (By Jove! . . . I have colic!) constant of lovers. . . . O, my fair Marie! . . . (Ah! I am lost. It is killing me! . . .)"

Here, the officer went to the window to throw himself headlong into the garden, but he caught sight of Queen Hortense and her ladies-in-waiting. Then he turned toward the Countess, placed his hand over the most decisive part of his uniform, and in despair groaned:

"Forgive me, madame, but I cannot stand it any longer."

"Sir, are you mad?" cried the young woman, perceiving that it was something besides love that convulsed the man's face.

The officer, with tears of rage in his eyes, quickly bent over the *schako* he had thrown in a corner of the room. . . .

"Well, Countess," said Queen Hortense, as she entered the bedchamber whence the Count and the King had departed, "how are you? . . . Why, where is she?"

"Madame," screamed the young woman, flying to the door of the boudoir, "do not come in! . . . For God's sake, do not come in!"

The Countess stopped, for she saw that all her companions were in the room. She looked at the Queen. Hortense, who was as indulgent as she was inquisitive, motioned to her suite and they left the room. The same day the officer joined the army, reached the outposts, and, seeking death, found it. He was a brave man, but he was not a philosopher.

It is said that one of our most famous painters, having conceived for the wife of one of his friends a passion which was shared by the lady, had to submit to the horrors of just such a *rendez-vous* which the husband had prepared out of revenge; but, if we are to believe the story, the shame was mutual, and wiser than Monsieur de B——, the lovers, subjected to the same infirmity, did not kill themselves.

The manner of coming home unexpectedly also depends a great deal on circumstances. Here is an example:

Lord Catesby's strength was tremendous. It happened one day that, returning from a fox-hunt which he had promised to attend, to mislead his wife, no doubt, he started toward a fence where he said he had noticed a very fine horse. As he was passionately fond of horses, he drew near to examine this one at close range. He caught sight of Lady Catesby, who was in dire need of his protection if he cared to save his honor. He pounced on a gentleman and interrupted the criminal conversation by grabbing him around the waist; then he threw him over the fence into the road.

"Remember, sir," he said, "that henceforth you will have to address yourself to me when you desire anything on these premises." He spoke with great calmness.

"Very well, my lord, will you have the kindness to throw me my horse?"

But the phlegmatic lord had already taken his wife's arm and was saying gravely:

"I blame you very much, my dear, for not letting me know that I was to love you for two. Henceforth, all even days I will love you for this man and the other days for my own account."

This adventure is considered in England one of the finest homecomings. It is true that it meant joining with rare happiness the eloquence of gesture to the eloquence of speech.

But the art of coming home unexpectedly, whose principles are only new deductions of the system of courtesy and dissimulation recommended by our anterior Meditations, is nothing but the preparation of conjugal peripitias, which we are now about to consider.

MEDITATION XXII

CONCERNING PERIPITIAS

The word *peripitia* is a literary term which means *an unexpected incident*.

To bring about the latter in the drama you are playing, is a mode of defense which is as easy to undertake as its success is assured. While advising its use, we shall not conceal from you the dangers it holds. The conjugal peripitia can be likened to those fine fevers which either kill or cure for life the person whom they attack. Therefore, when it succeeds, it places a woman for years in the calm regions of virtue.

Besides, this mode is the last of all those that science has allowed us to discover up to the present time.

The Saint-Barthélemy, the Sicilian Vespers, the death of Lucretia, the two landings of Napoleon at Fréjus, are political peripitias. You will not be able to perform such vast ones; however, all proportions being the same, your conjugal *coups de théâtre* will be no less effective than the ones to which we have just referred.

But, as the art of creating situations and changing,

through natural events, the aspect of scenes, constitutes genius; as the return to virtue of a woman whose foot has lightly trodden the golden paths of vice is the most difficult of all peripitias; and as genius cannot be taught and cannot be shown; the student of conjugal law is forced to acknowledge his inability to reduce to fixed principles a science which is as changeable as circumstances, as elusive as opportunity, as undefinable as instinct.

To use an expression that neither Diderot, Voltaire nor d'Alembert succeeded in naturalizing, a conjugal peripitias *se subodore*. Therefore, our only resource will be to imperfectly outline various similar conjugal situations, thereby imitating that philosopher of olden times, who, trying vainly to comprehend motion, walked straight ahead in order to grasp its incomprehensible laws.

A husband may, according to the principles set forth in the Meditation on "Police Methods," have forbidden his wife to receive the visits of the bachelor whom he suspects of being her lover; she has promised never to see him again. This created little conjugal scenes which we shall leave to matrimonial imaginations; a husband will be far more successful in picturing them than we, for all he has to do is to refer in thought to the days when delightful desires brought about sincere confidences, when the resources of his policy put in motion various well-thought-out schemes.

Let us suppose, in order to lend more interest to this normal scene, that it is you, husband who are reading this book, whose carefully organized surveillance discloses that your wife, taking advantage of the time you have to devote to some State banquet is going to receive Monsieur A——z.

You come home early enough to have your return coincide with that gentleman's arrival, for we would not advise you to risk a very long intermission. But *how* do you come home? . . . No longer should you follow the principles of the preceding Meditation. Will you be infuriated? . . . Not at all. You should be thoroughly good-natured and come home like a man who has forgotten something, his wallet, or his official memoranda, or his snuff-box, or his handkerchief.

Then you will be able to surprise the lovers, or your wife, warned by her maid, will have concealed the celibate.

Let us, therefore, dwell on these two situations.

Here, we wish it to be understood that all husbands must be able to strike terror into the hearts of their spouses, and prepare their matrimonial "*2 septembre*" a long time in advance.

Therefore, any husband whose wife has shown *first symptoms* should never fail to give, now and then, his personal opinion regarding the conduct a husband should follow in great matrimonial crises.

"I, for one, would not hesitate to kill any man I found with my wife," should be a frequent remark.

When discussing a question brought up by yourself for debate, you should insist that the law should give a father right of life and death over his children, so that he might destroy the adulterous offspring, as was the custom among the old Romans.

These stern views, which do not compromise you in the least, will tend to produce wholesome terror in your wife's soul. You should emit them in a bantering way and assure her:

"Oh yes, I would make a very neat job of it, my dear! How would you like to be dispatched into the other world by me? . . ."

A woman cannot help but think that, some day, these jests may turn out to be serious, for there is still love in these involuntary crimes; then women, who are such adepts at telling the truth in a joking way, often suspect their husbands of making use of this feminine ruse.

So, when the husband surprises his wife in the midst of an innocent conversation, her head, still guiltless, should produce the same mythological effect as that of the celebrated Gorgon.

In order to obtain a favorable peripetia in this conjecture, you should either play a pathetic scene, *à la* Diderot, or else use irony, like Cicero, or pounce on a pair of pistols, if you think that an effect of this kind would be beneficial.

A clever husband once played a scene of feeling and per-

formed it with great credit. He entered the room, caught sight of the lover and banished him with a glance. After the celibate had taken his departure, the husband dropped on his knees before his wife and recited a long monologue, the burden of which was: "Oh! my darling Caroline, to think that I never knew how to love you! . . ."

Then they both wept and the tearful scene lacked nothing to make it complete in every way.

When treating of the second manner in which a peripititia can be brought about, we shall explain the motives which compel a husband to vary the scene according to the more or less high degree of feminine cunning.

Now let us continue:

If your luck has it that the lover be concealed, the scene will be all the finer.

If the apartment is constructed after the manner described in Meditation XIV, you will easily discover the place where the bachelor is in hiding, even if, like Byron's *Don Juan*, he has concealed himself beneath a sofa-cushion. If by chance, the apartment is in disorder, you should be sufficiently familiar with it to be sure that it does not harbor two hiding-places.

Finally, if by some diabolical inspiration he has made himself so small that he has retired into an unbelievably strange nook (for one can expect anything from a bachelor), your wife will not be able to keep her eyes off his hiding-place or she will try to look in the opposite direction and then nothing is easier for a husband than to lay a little trap for his wife.

As soon as you discover the hiding-place, march straight up to it and confront the lover.

Now is the time you should try to be splendid. Keep your head thrown back in a pose of superiority, for this attitude will add enormously to the effect you wish to produce.

The most important of your duties is to crush the bachelor with a few appropriate words, that you will have had ample time to improvise; and after having brought him to the dust, you should coldly convey to him that his presence

is no longer desired. You must be very courteous, but as cutting as the blade of a knife and as impassive as the law itself. This icy contempt may already have produced its effect on your wife. You must not indulge in fury or wild gestures. "Men of lofty social position," says a young English author, "are never like those common folk who cannot lose a fork without apprising the whole neighborhood of the fact."

After the bachelor has departed, you will find yourself alone with your wife, and then is the time for winning her forever.

You should place yourself in front of her and assume an outward calmness which should veil imperfectly a deep inner emotion; then choose among the following ideas which we present, the ones best adapted to your principles: "Madame, I shall not make mention of your vows nor of my love for you; you are too clever and I am too proud, for me to bore you with the commonplace remarks which all husbands have a right to make in a case like this; their slightest fault is to be in the right. I will feel neither wrath nor resentment. I am not the one who has been outraged, for I despise the vulgar opinion which attaches blame and ridicule to a man whose wife's conduct is not above reproach. I am examining my conscience and cannot discover in what respect I have been at fault and why I have deserved to be deceived. I love you still. I have never failed, I will not say in my duty, for there was never any hardship in worshiping you, but in the loving obligations that genuine feeling imposes on us. You have my entire trust and you manage my money. I have never refused you anything. In fact, this is the first time that I have ever shown you, I will not say sternness, but disapproval. However, let us pass over this, for I do not want to sing my own praises at a time when you show me with such overwhelming directness that there must be something lacking in me and that I am not destined by Nature to make you happy. So I will ask you as a friend speaking to a friend, how you were able to expose three lives as you have done; the life of the mother of my children, which will always be sacred to me; that of the head of the

family, and that of the . . . man . . . you love. . . . (Here she may perhaps fall at your feet; you should not permit it, for she is unworthy of the place.) For . . . you no longer love me, Eliza. Well, my poor child (you should call her *my poor child* only if the crime has not been committed), why should we deceive one another? . . . Why didn't you tell me? . . . If love vanishes between husband and wife, is there not always friendship and confidence? . . . Are we not two companions following one road? Why should not the one stretch out a hand to the other to help him and keep him from falling? But perhaps I am saying more than I should and wounding your pride . . . Eliza . . . Eliza! . . ."

What in Heaven's name do you expect your wife to reply? There is necessarily a peripetia.

Among a hundred women there are always a good half-dozen weak creatures who, in this great crisis, always go back to their husbands, like burned children dread the fire. However, a scene like this is a real antidote, the doses of which must be regulated by experienced hands.

With certain timorous women who possess gentle and fearsome souls, it will be all-sufficient to indicate the lover's hiding-place and to say: "Monsieur A——z is there! . . . (Then shrug your shoulders.) How can you risk the lives of two fine men? I will leave the room so that he can escape; now, never let this happen again."

But there are some women whose hearts are so disturbed by these terrible scenes that they sometimes burst a blood-vessel, while others develop serious ailments in consequence of the shock. Some are apt to lose their minds. We have even known of instances where women committed suicide and we do not believe that you desire the sinner's death.

However, the fairest and gayest of all French queens, the gracious and unfortunate Mary Stuart, did not let the death of Rizzio, who breathed his last in her arms, interfere with her love for Bothwell; but then, she was a queen, and queens have natures which are different from those of other mortals.

We shall, therefore, suppose that the woman whose de-

scription embellishes our first Meditation is another Mary Stuart and shall not tarry in raising the curtain on the fifth act of that great drama called *Marriage*.

The matrimonial peripititia can happen anywhere and thousands of occurrences can give birth to it. Sometimes it may be a handkerchief, like in *The Moor of Venice*, or a pair of slippers, like in *Don Juan*, sometimes it may be the fault of your spouse who will exclaim: "Dear Alphonse!" instead of "Dear Adolph!" Lastly, any husband noticing that his wife is in debt, may go to her largest creditor and request him to come to the house in order to prepare a peripititia. "Monsieur Josse, you are a jeweler and your passion for selling gems is only equalled by your passion for being paid for them. Madame la Comtesse owes you thirty thousand francs. If you want to get your money to-morrow (one should always interview tradesmen at the end of the month), call at the house at noon. Her husband will be present; do not pay any attention to the signs she may make to you to keep silent. Speak out. I will pay you."

In a word, peripitias are to marriage what numbers are to arithmetic.

All the principles of lofty matrimonial philosophy which permeate the defensive means indicated in the second part of our book are taken from the very nature of sentiments and were found scattered through the book of life. In fact, just as clever people instinctively *apply* the *laws* of taste, when they would be very puzzled to *deduce* its *principles*; so we have seen a number of passionate people employing with rare skill the information which we have developed and never, with any one of these persons, was there a fixed plan. The sentiment of their position revealed to them but incomplete fragments of a great system; in this, they were like the scientists of the sixteenth century, whose microscopes were not perfect enough to permit them to view all the creatures whose existence they discovered by their patient genius.

We hope that the remarks already presented in this work and those which are to follow, will be of a nature calculated

to destroy the opinion which makes frivolous men regard marriage as a sinecure. According to us, a husband who is bored is a heretic; he is even worse, he is a man outside of conjugal life and one who has no conception of what it means. Referring to this, perhaps these Meditations will reveal to many ignorant husbands the mysteries of a world through which they wander with closed eyes.

Let us hope, furthermore, that these principles wisely applied will be instrumental in bringing about a number of conversions and that between the almost white pages which separate this second part from "Civil War," there will be room for a great many tears and repentances.

Yes, among the four hundred thousand "nice" women we so carefully selected from among the European nations, we like to believe that there will only be a certain number, let us say three hundred thousand, for instance, who will be charming, perverse and belligerent enough to hoist the flag of "Civil War."

So, *aux armes, aux armes!**

*To arms, to arms!

PART THIRD

CONCERNING CIVIL WAR

“As fair as Klopstock’s seraphim, as terrible as Milton’s devils.”—DIDEROT.

MEDITATION XXIII

MANIFESTOES

THE preliminary precepts with which science can arm a husband in the approaching crisis are few; it is a much more important question to find out whether he will succumb, than whether he will be able to resist.

We shall, however, erect a few beacons which will serve to light up the arena where the husband is going to find himself with only religion and the law on his side, pitted against his wife who has the entire support of society and the added strength of her crafty nature.

LXXXII

Everything can be expected and supposed of a woman who is in love.

LXXXIII

The actions of a woman who wants to deceive her husband are almost always studied, but never reasoned.

LXXXIV

The majority of women act like the flea; they proceed by disconnected leaps. They escape through the depth of their first ideas, and interruptions in their plans are favorable to them. But they hold forth in a space that a husband can easily circumscribe; and if he keeps cool, he may often head off this organized saltpeter.

LXXXV

A husband should never allow himself to utter one hostile word to his wife in the presence of a third person.

LXXXVI

When a woman makes up her mind to be false to her marriage vows, she considers her husband everything or nothing. One may go by her attitude.

LXXXVII

A woman lives with her head, her heart or her passions. When his wife is old enough to judge life for herself, a husband should find out whether the infidelity she plans is a result of vanity, affection or temperament. Temperament can be cured; affection offers the husband a good road to success; but vanity is incurable. A woman who lives with her brain is a frightful curse; she has all the faults of the passionate woman added to those of the sentimental one, without having their excuse. She is without pity, love, virtue, or sex.

LXXXVIII

The woman who lives with her brain will try to inspire indifference in her husband; the woman who lives with her heart, hatred; and the passionate woman will try to disgust him.

LXXXIX

A husband never risks anything by making people believe in his wife's fidelity, and by assuming a patient air, or keeping quiet: silence always impresses a woman tremendously.

XC

To appear to know all about your wife's passion is foolish; but to appear to ignore everything is clever, besides being about the only attitude to assume. Accordingly, it is said that in France all husbands are witty.

XCI

The great stumbling-block is ridicule. "At least let us appear on good terms in public!" should be the axiom of every married couple. It is losing too much when both parties forfeit the honor, esteem, consideration, respect or whatever you wish to call that social *something*.

These axioms have reference only to the *struggle*. The *catastrophe* will have its own.

We have called this crisis *civil* war for two reasons: never was there a more intestine nor a more polished one. But when and how will this fatal war break out?

Ah! do you think for a moment that your wife will have an army and the flourish of trumpets? She may perhaps have one officer, but that will be all; and that tiny army will be sufficient to destroy the peace of your household.

"You prevent me from seeing the people I care for!" is an introduction which has served as pretext for a quarrel in a great many households. This phrase and all the various ideas which follow in its train is the formula most often used by vain and scheming women.

The most general manifesto is the one that is proclaimed in the conjugal bed, which is the principal scene of action. This question will be fully treated in the Meditation entitled, "Various Weapons," in the paragraph of "Modesty in Connection with Marriage."

Some lymphatic women will pretend to be affected by spleen in order to bring about a secret divorce between themselves and their husbands.

But almost all of them owe their freedom to a plan whose effect on most husbands is almost infallible and the insidiousness of which we are now going to expose.

One of the greatest of human mistakes is the belief that our honor and reputation are established by our actions, or are the result of the approval which conscience bestows on our conduct. A man who lives in the world is a slave to public opinion. Now, in France a private citizen has far less influence in society than his wife, and she is there-

fore enabled to heap ridicule upon him. Women have a special gift for coloring with specious reasons the recriminations they make. They never defend anything but their own wrongs, and they excel in this, as they are clever enough to oppose authorities to arguments, assertions to proofs, so that they often reap a harvest of petty success. They understand each other wonderfully well, when one of them hands another a weapon which she herself may not use. In this way, they often ruin husbands without meaning to do so. They touch off the match and a long time afterward are frightened at the extent of the blaze.

As a general thing, all women band together against a tyrannical husband; for there is a secret alliance between them, as between priests of the same religion. They hate each other, but they will protect each other. You can never win but one of them; and even then this seduction would be a triumph for your wife.

Then you are ostracized by the feminine empire; you will observe sarcastic smiles on all lips and sharp epigrams in every retort. The clever creatures amuse themselves by decorating the daggers with which they intend to pierce you.

The perfidious art of reticence, the malice of silence, the cruelty of suppositions, the false geniality of a request, everything is used against you. A man who has the pretension of keeping his wife under his thumb is too dangerous not to be destroyed; would not his conduct be a satire on all husbands? So they attack you with bitter jests, serious arguments or the commonplace maxims of chivalry. A swarm of bachelors help them in all their efforts and you are pursued, assailed as a crank, a tyrant, a lunatic and a suspicious person.

Your wife defends you like the bear in La Fontaine's fable*; she hurls bricks at you to drive away the flies that have settled on your head. Every evening she relates to you the different remarks she has gathered about you, and will ask you to explain actions you have never committed and words you have never spoken. She will tell you that

* *L'ours et le Jardinier.*

she has taken your part in matters that have never occurred; she has boasted of a freedom she is far from enjoying, in order to free you from the odium of not allowing her to be as independent as she should be. The huge rattle she shakes will ring forever in your ears. Your dear spouse will bewilder you, torment you and will take pleasure in letting you feel the thorns of matrimony. She will be charming to you in public and a shrew at home. She will be moody when you are cheerful, and will irritate you with her chatter when you are depressed. Your faces will be a constant antithesis.

Few men have sufficient strength to withstand this first comedy which is always cleverly played and is like the war-cry of the Cossacks when they are advancing upon the enemy. Some husbands get angry and commit themselves forever. Some forsake their wives. While even some of the best minds do not know how to wield the magical wand that should dissipate this feminine phantasmagoria.

Two-thirds of the wives know how to win independence through this one maneuver, which is really only the review of their fighting forces. So the war is soon terminated.

But a self-contained man can derive much amusement, if he has the courage to keep his *sang-froid* during the first assault, from allowing his wife to see, by witty sallies, that he is aware of the sentiments which prompt her actions; from following her step by step through the labyrinth she is treading, from telling her at every turn that she is deceiving herself, without ever letting his temper get the best of him, or going beyond the jest.

However, war is declared, and if the husband has not been blinded by the first display of fireworks, a woman, in order to assure her triumph, has a great many strings to her bow which the following Meditations will reveal:

MEDITATION XXIV

PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGY

ARCH-DUKE CHARLES has given us a very fine treatise on military art, entitled *Principes de la Stratégie appliqués aux campagnes de 1796*. These principles seem to us very much like the poetics for published poems. Nowadays, we are more competent, we invent rules for works and works for rules. But of what use were the old principles of military art against the overwhelming genius of Napoleon? If, therefore, you evolve a system out of the information given by that great captain, whose new tactics have ruined the old ones, what guarantee does the future give you that it will not create another Napoleon? Books on military art meet, with but few exceptions, with the same fate as old works on chemistry and physics. Everything is subject to change either in the immediate future or at some distant period.

This is, in a few words, the history of our work.

As long as we had to deal with a woman who was inert and sluggish, nothing was easier than to weave a net to contain her; but as soon as she awakens and begins to protest, everything becomes mixed and complicated. If a husband attempted to protect himself with the principles of the preceding system, by enmeshing his wife in the insecure net that Part Second has woven, he would be like Wursser, Mack and Beaulieu, who made marches and pitched camps, while Napoleon was slowly circumventing them and using their own devices to bring about their ruin.

That is just how your wife will act.

How will you be able to know the truth when both of you disguise it under the same falsehood, and when you both present the same trap? To whom will victory belong when both of you are caught in the same snare?

“My dear one, I am going to see Madame So-and-So, and have ordered the carriage. Don’t you want to go with me? Now, be nice, and accompany your wife.”

You think:

"She would be in a fine fix were I to accept! She only urges me to go so that I will refuse!"

Therefore you reply:

"Why, yes, I have to see Mr. So-and-So; he has charge of a report which may affect our interests in such and such a venture and I must see him. Then I am going to the Ministère des Finances, so everything is all right."

"Well, dear, go dress while Céline finishes my toilet; but do not make me wait for you."

"Darling, I am ready!" you exclaim in a few minutes, arriving on the scene freshly shaven and arrayed for the drive.

But all is changed. A letter has arrived; the dress does not fit; the dressmaker has just come; if it is not the dressmaker, it is your son or your mother. Out of a hundred husbands, ninety-nine will depart satisfied, believing that their wives are well guarded, while, in reality, it is their wives who have shown them the door.

A legitimate wife, whose husband cannot escape, who has no financial worries, and who, to find an outlet for the wealth of intellect with which she is endowed, thinks night and day of how she can bring variety into her life, soon discovers the mistake she has made by letting herself fall into a trap or into a peripetia; of course, she will endeavor then to turn the weapons against you.

There is one man among all who strangely affects your wife; the mere sight of him annoys her; she cannot tolerate his voice, manners, nor mind. Everything he does irritates her; he pursues her and she finds him odious; never mention his name to her. It would seem as if she were trying her best to contradict you; for it appears that you think a great deal of this very man; you like his character because he flatters you; so your wife pretends that your liking for him is just vanity. If you happen to give a ball or a concert, you almost invariably have a discussion about him, and madame reproaches you for wanting her to associate with people she does not care for.

"At least, monsieur, I have warned you. That man is

sure to cause you sorrow. You had better heed a woman's judgment of a man. And let me tell you that this baron whom you have taken such a fancy to is a most dangerous person and that you are very wrong in bringing him to your home. But that is just like you; you compel me to see a man I hate, and if I should ask you to invite Mr. So-and-So, you would not do so, because you think I like him! I admit that he is very agreeable, but you are more attractive than he is."

These crude rudiments of female tactics, fortified by deceptive gestures, clever glances and misleading tones, and even by a malicious silence, are, so to speak, the very essence of their conduct.

At this point, there are but few husbands who do not think of devising a little trap, they invite Mr. So-and-So and the fantastical baron, who represents the man whom your wife abhors, hoping to discover a lover in the person of the supposedly well-liked bachelor.

Oh! I have often met in society young men who were real feather-brains in love matters and who were the absolute dupes of the false friendship professed by some married woman obliged to get her husband off the track of her real lover! . . . Those poor innocents spent their time running errands, renting theater-boxes and accompanying their would-be mistresses on their daily promenade in the Bois; public rumor credited them with being the lovers of women whose hands they did not even kiss; their conceit prevented them from denying the friendly rumors and, like those young priests who say *messes blanches*, they enjoyed a factitious passion, genuine understudies of Love.

Sometimes, in these circumstances, a husband comes home and inquires of the *concierge*: "Has anyone been here to-day?"—"Monsieur le Baron was here at two o'clock to see you; but, as nobody was home but madame, he did not go up; but Mr. So-and-So is there now."

You enter the drawing-room and espy a young bachelor immaculately dressed and scented, a perfect dandy, in short. He is charming to you; your wife listens for his footstep and dances all the dances with him; if you forbid her to

see him, she will be very indignant, and it is only long years afterwards (refer to Meditation on "Last Symptoms") that you will perceive the innocence of Mr. So-and-So and the guilt of the baron.

We have noticed, as one of the most skillful maneuvers, that of a young woman impelled by an irresistible passion, who lavished her hatred on the man she did not care for and who gave her lover at all times tokens of her regard. Just as her husband felt sure that she was in love with the *sigisbeo* and despised the *patito*, she let herself be caught with the *patito* in a situation whose risk had been thought out in advance, and which made her husband and the despised bachelor believe that her love and her aversion alike were feigned. After she had plunged her husband into this uncertainty, she let him discover a very passionate love letter. One evening, in the midst of the wonderful peripitia she had concocted, madame fell at her husband's feet, weeping, and accomplished a real *coup de théâtre*.

"I have enough regard and esteem for you," she cried, "to confide in no one but you. I love another man. Is that a thing I can control? But what I *can* do, is to acknowledge it to you and to beg you to protect me from myself, to save me. Be my master and be a stern one. Take me away from here, and banish the one who is the cause of all this trouble; console me and I will forget him. Indeed, I want to forget him. I crave your pardon most humbly for the perfidy which love suggested to me. Yes, I will admit that the love that I feigned for my cousin was a trap for you, I like him as a friend, but not as a lover. . . . Oh! forgive me! . . . I can love no one but . . . (Here she sobbed violently). "Oh! let us go away, let us leave Paris."

She was weeping; her hair hung about her shoulders and her dress was disarranged; it was midnight and the husband forgave her. The cousin was exonerated from all blame and the Minotaur devoured another victim.

What rules can one give to combat such adversaries? All the diplomacy of the Vienna Congress is in such women's heads; they are as strong when they surrender as when

they elude you. What man is clever enough to lay down his strength and power to follow his wife in this maze?

To constantly plead the false to learn the true, the true for the false; to change your batteries at a moment's notice, and silence your cannon just when you are going to fire it off; to ascend a mountain with the enemy, only to climb down again into the plains in a few minutes; to accompany him in his devious paths, to obey when necessary and oppose an inert resistance *à propos*; to possess the art of scaling the ladder of suppositions, like a musician who runs from the highest to the lowest key on his instrument, and to divine the secret intentions of a woman; to fear her caresses and to find in them more food for thought than pleasure, all this is child's play for a clever man and for those lucid and observing imaginations that have the gift to act while they are absorbed in thought; but there are a great many husbands who shrink at the mere idea of putting these theories into practice where a woman is concerned.

Those are the men who prefer to spend a lifetime trying to become fair chess-players or mediocre billiardists.

Some will tell you that it would be impossible for them to keep their minds under such constant tension and to give up their lifelong habits. Then, a woman may well triumph. She recognizes that she is superior to her husband in mind and energy (although this superiority is but momentary), and thence springs a sentiment of contempt for the head of the family.

That there are so many men who are not the masters in their own homes is not because they lack the *will*, but because they lack the *talent*, to be successful.

Regarding those who accept the passing labors of this terrible duel, it is true that they are in need of great moral strength.

Indeed, at the time when it is thought most necessary to employ all the resources of this secret strategy, it is often quite useless to attempt to lay traps for these satanical creatures. Once a woman has reached a certain stage of dissimulation, her face becomes as unreadable as a vacuum.

Here is an example which came under my personal observation.

A very young, pretty and clever Parisian coquette was in bed one morning; at the foot of the bed lounged one of her dearest *friends*; a letter arrived from one of her most impetuous admirers to whom she had given the right to act tyrannically. The note was written in pencil and ran as follows:

“I have learned that Monsieur C—— is with you this very moment and I am waiting outside to blow his brains out.”

Madame D—— quietly continued the conversation with Monsieur C—— and requested him to hand her a little red leather portfolio, which he brought her.

“Thank you, dear,” said she. “Now go on, I am listening.”

So C—— continued to talk and she to listen, while at the same time she wrote the following note:

“As long as you are jealous of C—— you can both blow your brains out, if you wish; you may die, but I doubt whether you will give up . . . the ghost.” (*Je doute si vous rendrez . . . l'esprit.*)

“My dear friend,” said she, “please light that candle. That is fine; you are delightful. Now, be kind enough to let me rise while you hand this letter to Monsieur d’H—— who is waiting outside.”

All this was said with admirable coolness. The voice, the intonation, the countenance were impassive. The bold conception was crowned with complete success. Monsieur d’H—— when he received the reply from the hands of Monsieur C—— felt his wrath melt away and was troubled only by the thought of how he could hide his desire to laugh.

But the more lighted torches we throw into the great abyss we are trying to illuminate, the deeper we will find it to be. It is a bottomless pit. We believe that we can

accomplish our task in a more instructive and pleasing manner by showing the principles of strategy put into action at a time when woman had attained a high degree of vicious proficiency. One example reveals more resources, suggests more maxims than any amount of theory.

One day, at the close of a repast at which Prince Lebrun was entertaining a few intimate friends, the guests, warmed by the champagne, were discussing the fertile resources of the feminine mind. The recent adventure attributed to Madame la Comtesse R. D. S. J. D. A. with regard to a necklace, was the theme of the conversation.

A worthy artist, a student high in the Emperor's favor, was vigorously defending the unmanly opinion that no male could resist the wiles of womankind.

"I have fortunately experienced," said he, "that nothing is sacred for them."

The ladies of the party protested.

"But I can quote an instance."

"It must be an exception."

"Let us hear the story," said one young woman.

"Oh! tell it," exclaimed all the guests.

The prudent old gentleman glanced around and after he had taken note of the various ages of the women, he smiled and began:

"Since we all know what life is, I will tell you the story."

A great silence fell over the guests and the narrator read aloud from a tiny book which he drew from his pocket:

"I was madly in love with the Comtesse de ——. I was twenty and artless, so she deceived me; I got angry, so she left me; I was artless, so I regretted her; I was twenty, so she forgave me; and as I was twenty and still artless, still deceived, but no longer forsaken, I imagined that I was the most fortunate of lovers and consequently the happiest of men. The Countess was the friend of Madame de T——, who seemed to have designs on me, although she never compromised herself; for she had scruples and was full of propriety. One day, while I was waiting for the Countess in her box at the theater, somebody called to me from a neighboring box. It was Madame de T——.

“‘What!’ said she, ‘already here! Is it attachment or idleness? Come and see me!’

“Her voice and her manner were arch, but I was far from expecting anything romantic.

“‘Have you any plans for to-night?’ she inquired. ‘Do not make any. If I save you from being bored now, you must be devoted. . . . Ah! no questions, only obedience. Summon my servants.’

“I inclined myself before her and obeyed.

“‘Go to this gentleman’s home and say that he will not be back until to-morrow,’ she commanded the lackey.

“Then she made a sign to the servant and whispered something to him as he went out. The opera began. I tried to say something, but the lady silenced me. When the first act was over, the lackey reappeared with a note and notified us that all was ready. Then she smiled at me, took my hand and drew me after her into her carriage. Soon we were on the highway, without my having the slightest idea of our destination. To each question, she responded with a laugh. If I had not known that she was a woman of *grande passion* and that for a long time she had been infatuated with the Marquis de V——, that she knew that I knew this, I would surely have thought that I was to enjoy a *bonne fortune*; but she was aware of the state of my heart and was the intimate friend of the Countess. Therefore, I banished all presumption and waited. After the first relay, we started off again with lightning rapidity. It was becoming serious. I insisted on knowing how far the jest was to go.

“‘How far?’ she laughed. ‘To the loveliest place on earth; but try to guess. You never will. You had better give it up, for you could never imagine where we are going. We are going to my husband’s house. Do you know him?’

“‘Not in the least.’

“‘Ah! so much the better; I was afraid you might. But I hope that you will like him. They are trying to bring about a reconciliation between us. It has been going on for six months and for the last month we have been corresponding. I think it is rather gallant in me to visit him.’

“‘I agree with you. But what have I to do in this? What part am I to play in a reconciliation?’

“‘Ah! that is my business! You are young, charming and inexperienced; you please me and will help me over the *ennui* of a *tête-à-tête*.’

“‘But I think it is strange to choose the time you have planned for a reconciliation to introduce me to your husband; I do not see anything very funny in a situation which is bound to be awkward.’

“‘I want you to amuse me,’ she said, with a slightly imperious manner. ‘So you had better not preach.’

“I saw that her mind was made up, and I made the best of my position. I began to laugh at the rôle I was to play and we became very gay. We changed horses again. The soft light of the stars shone in a wonderfully pure sky and shed a voluptuous radiance over everything. We were fast nearing the end of our *tête-à-tête*. At intervals, my companion made me admire the beauty of the landscape, the stillness of the night and of Nature. In order to admire, we both looked out of the window and our faces were very close. The carriage gave a sudden lurch and she pressed my hand; and what seemed to me a most extraordinary circumstance, for the stone in the road was not very large, I kept my arms around Madame de T——. I do not know what we were trying to see; but it is certain that, in spite of the moonlight, things were beginning to look hazy, when my companion wrenched herself free and threw herself back in her corner.

“‘Have you planned,’ she said, after a somewhat long silence, ‘to convince me of the imprudence of my conduct? How embarrassing this is for me! . . .’

“‘Plans!’ I replied, ‘with you? What an idea! You could see through them at once; but a surprise . . . is pardonable.’

“‘I suppose you counted on that?’

“That was as far as we had gotten when we entered the courtyard of the château. Everything was brilliant with light and betokened pleasure, excepting the countenance of the master, who, when he saw me, looked the very opposite

of pleased. He came to the carriage-door and expressed equivocal delight, as became one who sought a reconciliation. I learned later that the latter was imperiously demanded by family reasons. I was introduced to Monsieur de T—— and he bowed coldly. He offered his hand to his wife and I followed them, thinking of my past, present and future rôle. We passed through apartments decorated with exquisite taste. The master of the place had called upon all the refinements of luxury in order to animate his weakly body by voluptuous surroundings. As I did not know what to say, I admired everything rapturously. The goddess of the temple, who did the honors very gracefully, received my compliments.

“‘You have seen nothing as yet,’ she said; ‘I must show you my husband’s apartments.’

“‘Madame, I had them pulled down five years ago.’

“‘Ah! ah!’ she said.

“At supper, she offered her husband some veal, and he replied:

“‘Madame, since three years I have been on a milk diet.’

“‘Ah! ah!’ she said again.

“Can anyone imagine three people more surprised than we were to be in each other’s company? The husband looked at me with arrogance and I put on my boldest air. Madame de T—— kept smiling at me and was charming; Monsieur de T—— accepted me as a necessary evil, and Madame de T—— paid him in his own coin. Never, in all my life, have I been present at such a strange supper. After the meal was over, I thought that we would retire early; but I was right only with regard to Monsieur de T——. When we entered the parlor:

“‘I am glad, madame, that you took the precaution of bringing this gentleman. You judged rightly that I would not be very entertaining company, and you acted wisely, for I beg your leave to retire.’

“Then, turning to me, he said with deep sarcasm:

“‘Monsieur, I trust, will excuse me, and will also excuse me to madame.’

“He left us alone. Thoughts? . . . In one minute I

thought enough for one year. We looked at each other in such a peculiar way, Madame de T—— and I, that she proposed a walk in the garden while the servants had supper, she said.

“The night was superb. We could hardly distinguish objects close at hand and the darkness seemed to veil them only to allow the imagination greater play. The gardens, which extended over the mountainside, were edged by the Seine, that wended its glittering way between a mass of little green islands, which embellished these already beautiful parts and lent them a thousand different attractions. We walked up and down the longest terrace, which was covered with thick trees. My companion had forgotten her husband’s irony and, while walking, began to take me into her confidence. . . . As confidences seem to attract one another, I also made some, and they were beginning to get more and more intimate and interesting. Madame de T—— had taken my arm, but later I took hers and held her so that her feet scarcely touched the ground. The attitude was pleasant, but a trifle fatiguing. We had been walking a long time and we still had a lot of things to say to each other. We came to a grass bench and sat down without changing our position. Then we began to praise confidence, its charms and its sweetness. . . .

“‘Ah!’ she said, ‘nobody can enjoy it more than we do, and with as little fear. . . . I am too well aware of the tie that binds you to have any misgivings when with you. . . .’

“Perhaps she wished to be contradicted. But I said not a word. So we convinced each other that we could be nothing but unimpeachable friends.

“‘Still, I was afraid that the occurrence in the carriage had alarmed your mind?’

“‘Oh! I am not so easily alarmed!’

“‘However, I fear that it made a bad impression on you?’

“‘What do you want me to do to put your mind at rest?’

“‘I want you to grant me the kiss that chance . . .’

“‘Very well; if I refused, your conceit might lead you to believe that I am afraid of you.’

“I got the kiss. . . . Kisses are like confidences, one follows the other. Our kisses multiplied, interrupted our conversation and finally took its place; hardly did we have time to sigh. . . . All was still. . . . We could *hear* the silence; for silence can be heard. We arose without a word and resumed our walk.

“‘We must go in,’ she said, ‘for the wind from the river is icy and will harm us.’

“‘I do not think it will hurt us,’ I retorted.

“‘Perhaps not! Anyway, we must go in.’

“‘This is for me? I suppose you wish to preserve me from the dangerous impressions of our walk—from the consequences it might have—for myself—of course. . . .’

“‘You are modest,’ she laughingly replied, ‘and you attribute a strange delicacy of feeling to me.’

“‘The idea! But as long as you look at it that way, we had better go in; in fact, I insist upon it.’

“Awkward conversation, which must be excused, for both of us were trying to say something entirely different from what our thoughts were dwelling on.

“So she forced me to take the path that led to the château. I do not know, that is, I did not know, whether she was doing this against her own feelings, whether it was the result of a determined purpose or whether she felt as badly as I did to see such a promising interview end in such a manner; but, by a mutual instinct, we walked more slowly and made our way sadly toward the château, disappointed with each other and with ourselves. We did not know on what or on whom to lay the blame. Neither of us had the right to expect or demand anything. We did not even have the solace of mutual recrimination. What bliss a quarrel would have been! . . . But how could we start one? . . . However, we were nearing the château, each one trying to think of a way to evade the duty which we had so awkwardly imposed upon each other. We had almost reached the front-door when Madame de T—— said to me:

“‘I am not satisfied with you! . . . After all I told you,

you have not told me anything! . . . You haven't said a word about the Countess. And still it is so pleasant to talk about a loved one! . . . I would have listened with such interest! . . . That was the least I could do after having snatched you from her. . . .'

" 'May I not reproach you with the same thing?' said I, interrupting her. 'And instead of making me the confidant of this strange reconciliation in which I am playing such a peculiar rôle, if you had told me about the Marquis. . . .'

" 'Stop!' she exclaimed. 'If you know anything about women, you know what their confidences mean. . . . Let us go back to you. Are you really happy with my friend? . . . I fear not. . . .'

" 'Why do you believe what the public takes pleasure in spreading around?'

" 'Do not try to pretend. . . . The Countess is less reticent than you. Women of her stamp are lavish with their own love secrets and those of their admirers, especially when the latter are so discreet, like you, that their triumph is not always apparent. I am far from accusing her of being a coquette; but a prude has as much vanity as other women. . . . Now, frankly, have you no fault to find with her? . . .'

" 'Madame, the night air is really too cool to stay out; did you not express the wish to go in?' I said with a smile.

" 'Do you think so? How strange. It is warm.'

" She had taken my arm, and we strolled on again; I did not notice the direction we had taken. What she had just told me of her lover, what she had said about my mistress, the trip, the scene in the carriage and on the grass bench, the semi-darkness, all these things had excited me. I was carried away with conceit and desire, but I was restrained by common-sense, or too moved to know exactly what my feelings were. While I was under the influence of these confusing sensations, my companion continued to talk about the Countess and my silence confirmed whatever she was pleased to say of her. However, several words she uttered brought me back to the realization of things.

" 'How clever she is!' she was saying. 'And how charm-

ing! A perfidy uttered by her sounds like a sally; an infidelity looks like a reasoned move, a sacrifice to propriety; no outbursts, always amiable; rarely tender, never true; unchaste by temperament, prude by system; vivacious, prudent, clever, foolish; she is a Proteus for form, and one of the Graces by her manners; she attracts and eludes. How many rôles I have seen her play! Between you and me, how many dupes she has made! How she laughed at the Baron, and what tricks she played the Marquis! When she took you, it was to distract the two rivals; they were going to have a row, for she had dealt too keenly with them and they had had no time to observe her. But she put you forward, gave them something new to think about, drove you mad, pitied you, consoled you. . . . Ah! how happy a clever woman is when, at this game, she feigns everything and feels nothing! But then, can it be considered happiness?’

“This last sentence, accompanied by an expressive sigh, was the crowning success. I felt as if a veil were dropping from my eyes without having the wit to see the one which was being put in its place. My mistress was the most deceitful of women and I thought I had discovered the one who had the most feeling. I sighed without knowing what that sigh might lead to. . . . My companion seemed sorry to have hurt me and to have allowed herself to draw a picture which, coming from a woman, might appear suspicious. I do not recollect what answer I made; for, without knowing what I was doing, we were slowly strolling along the highroad of sentiment; and we had gone so far that it was hard to tell what the end of the voyage would be. Fortunately, we had also directed our steps toward an arbor which stood at the end of the terrace, and which had witnessed many a happy hour! My companion described the interior. What a pity that we did not have the key! While talking, we reached the arbor and found that it was open. It was not very light inside, but then, darkness has its charms. We trembled as we crossed the threshold. . . . It was a sanctuary; was it to be the sanctuary of love? We sank down on a couch and for a minute or two listened to our beating hearts. The last ray of the moon did away

with a good many scruples. The hand that repulsed me felt my heart beat. She wanted to escape, but only sank the more tenderly into my arms. We conversed in silence with the language of thought. Nothing is more delightful than these wordless conversations. Madame de T—— took refuge in my arms, hid her head on my breast, sighed and grew calm under my caresses; she wept, consoled herself and demanded of love all that love had just ravished from her. The river broke the silence of the night with its soft splashing which seemed to be the echo of our palpitating hearts. The darkness did not allow us to distinguish any objects; but, through the transparent veil of that fine summer night, the queen of that beautiful place seemed exquisite to me.

“‘Ah!’ she whispered in a heavenly voice, ‘let us leave this dangerous place. . . . It robs one of the strength to resist.’

“She drew me away and we left the arbor regretfully.

“‘Ah! how happy she is!’ cried Madame de T——.

“‘Who?’ I asked.

“‘Have I spoken?’ she exclaimed with terror.

“When we reached the bench we paused unconsciously.

“‘What a tremendous distance,’ she said, ‘between this and the arbor!’

“‘Why,’ I said, ‘it looks as if this place were to be fatal to me? Is that a regret, or . . .’

“I do not know how it happened; but the conversation changed and became less serious. My companion even dared to jest about love’s pleasures by separating them from the moral side of the question and reducing them to their simplest expression; she proved that favors were only pleasure; that philosophically speaking, no engagements existed but those that were contracted with the public, by letting it into our secrets and committing flagrant indiscretions.

“‘What a lovely night we have found by chance,’ she said. ‘Well, if some reason should compel us to part tomorrow, our happiness, ignored by the whole of nature, would leave us no knot to untie . . . a few regrets, perhaps, compensated by a cherished remembrance; and then, really, pleasure with any of the slowness, worry and tyranny of

ceremonies.' We are such *machines* (I blush to say it) that, instead of all the sentiment which troubled me before this scene, I was at least responsible for half of these bold principles, and felt a fast-growing love for liberty.

"‘What a lovely night,’ she was saying, ‘and what beautiful surroundings! They have taken on new charms for me. Oh! never let us forget this arbor! . . . The château has a far more delightful spot even, but I cannot show you anything; you are like a child that wants to touch everything it sees and that breaks everything it touches.’

"‘Impelled by a feeling of curiosity, I protested that I would be very good. She changed the conversation.

"‘This night,’ she said, ‘would be without a flaw, if I were not angry with myself for having spoken the way I did about the Countess. It is not that I want to complain of you. Novelty has a charm of its own. You thought me desirable, and I believe in your good faith. But the force of habit is hard to break, and I do not possess that secret. By the way, what do you think of my husband?’

"‘Oh! rather surly, but then, he could not act differently with me.’

"‘Quite true, his régime is not agreeable, and he did not view you dispassionately. Our friendship would become suspicious to him.’

"‘Oh! it is already so.’

"‘You must acknowledge that he is in the right. Therefore, do not prolong your stay, for he would end by being disagreeable. As soon as people come, and they are sure to come,’ she said with a smile, ‘leave here. Besides, you have to safeguard appearances. . . . And remember the look of my husband when he left us yesterday! . . .’

"‘I was tempted to explain the adventure as a trap, but seeing the impression that her words had created in me, she added:

"‘Oh! he was more cheerful when he was furnishing the apartment he was speaking about. That was before our marriage. The rooms are connected with my chambers. Alas! it shows the artificial means he had to resort to in order to strengthen his sentiment.’

“‘What a pleasure,’ I said, greatly excited by the curiosity she aroused in me, ‘to avenge in this apartment your slightest charms and to restitute all that was stolen from them!’

“She thought this in excellent taste, but said:

“‘You promised to be good! . . .’

“I will throw a veil over the madness that all ages forgive youth in favor of so many disappointed desires and so many recollections. In the morning, Madame de T——, fairer than ever, opened her languorous eyes and said:

“‘Well, will you ever love the Countess as much as you do me?’

“I was about to answer her when a duenna appeared and said:

“‘Get up and go out. It is bright day and the château is full of noise and life.’

“Everything vanished like a dream. I found myself wandering about the halls before I had time to come to my senses. How could I reach an apartment that I was unfamiliar with? . . . Any error would be an indiscretion. I resolved that I would say I had taken an early walk. The fresh air soon quieted my imagination and dispelled the strangeness. Instead of an enchanted Nature, I saw an artless one. I felt truth taking possession of my soul, my thoughts followed in natural sequence and I was finally able to breathe. I immediately asked myself what I was to the woman I had just left. . . . I, who thought that she was desperately in love with the Marquis de V——. Had she broken with him? Had she taken me to succeed him or only to punish him? What a night! what an adventure! *but what a delightful woman!* While I was thus vaguely wondering, I heard a noise close by. I looked up, rubbed my eyes, could not believe my senses. . . . What do you think? There stood the Marquis!

“‘Perhaps you did not expect to see me so early?’ he said. ‘Well, how did it come off?’

“‘So you knew that I was here?’ I asked in amazement.

“‘Why, yes. I was told at the time of your departure. Did you fill your part well? Did the husband think your

arrival ridiculous? Does he hate you? Does he despise his wife's lover? When are you going away? . . . Oh! I have managed everything, and have a fine coach which is awaiting your orders. Some day, I will do the same for you, my friend, you may count on me, for I am very grateful to you for your trouble.'

"His last words gave me the key to the mystery and I understood my rôle.

"'But why did you come so soon?' said I; 'it would have been better to wait a day or two.'

"'Everything was thought out. It is chance which brings me here. I am supposed to come from a neighboring country-seat. But didn't Madame de T—— initiate you into the whole plot? I am angry at this lack of confidence in her. . . . After all you did for us! . . .'

"'My dear friend, she had her reasons! Had she told me, I might not have played my part so well.'

"'Was everything very funny? Do relate the details.'

"'Ah! just a minute, please. I did not know that it was a comedy, and although Madame de T—— gave me a rôle——'

"'You did not have a very fine one.'

"'Oh! do not let that worry you; there are no bad parts for accomplished actors.'

"'Ah! I understand; you played your part well.'

"'Very well.'

"'And Madame de T——?'

"'She was delightful.'

"'Can you understand how that woman could have been captured?' he said, looking at me with a triumphant expression. 'Oh! what trouble I had to win her! . . . But I have changed her character so that to-day she is perhaps the only woman whose faithfulness can be relied on.'

"'You have certainly succeeded.'

"'Oh! that is my special talent. She has only one fault. Nature, who has endowed her with every charm, has refused her the divine flame which is the crown of all her gifts; she makes you feel, but she herself feels nothing; she is a piece of marble.'

“ ‘I will have to take your word for it, for I cannot judge for myself. But are you aware that you know her as if you were her husband? Anybody would think that you were. If I had not had supper with him yesterday, I should say that you were he.’

“ ‘By the way, did he act like a fool?’

“ ‘Oh! he received me like a dog.’

“ ‘I understand. Let us go in and see Madame de T——; she must be awake.’

“ ‘But really, we should begin with the husband,’ said I.

“ ‘You are right. But first let us go to your rooms; I want a little more powder.’

“ ‘Tell me, did he really take you for her lover?’

“ ‘You will be able to judge by the reception he gives me. Let us go to his rooms at once.’

“I wanted to avoid taking him to my rooms, which I was not familiar with, but chance guided our steps to my apartments. The door, which was open, showed my man asleep in an armchair. A flickering candle was at his side. He foolishly handed a dressing-gown to the Marquis. I was on needles and pins; but the Marquis was so inclined to see everything in his own light, that my man only struck him as a dullard. We went to Monsieur de T——’s rooms. One can imagine the way in which he received me, and the compliments and attentions which were showered on the Marquis, whom the host urgently invited to remain. He suggested that the Marquis see his wife, in the hope that she might persuade him to stay. As for me, he did not dare invite me to remain, as he knew that my health was poor and the country was damp and full of fever. I looked so worn that it was clear that the atmosphere of the château was not good for me. The Marquis offered me his coach, which I accepted. The husband was delighted and everybody seemed satisfied. But I did not want to forego the pleasure of seeing Madame de T—— again. My impatience produced a fine impression. My friend could not think why his mistress had not yet awakened.

“ ‘It is wonderful,’ said he to me, as he followed Monsieur de T——, ‘he could not have answered better if his replies

had been suggested to him. He is a gentleman. I am glad that he is going to make up with his wife; they will have a very attractive home, and you must admit that he could not choose anyone cleverer than she.'

" 'Upon my word, you are right,' said I.

" 'Although the affair is so funny,' he said with a mysterious glance, 'not a word about it! I will let Madame de T—— know that her secret is in good hands.'

" 'I would have you believe that perhaps she counts more on me than on you for this; for you see that it does not spoil her sleep.'

" 'Oh! I admit that there is no one like you to send a woman to sleep.'

" 'And a husband, and even a lover, when the occasion demands, my friend.'

" Finally, Monsieur de T—— was allowed to enter his wife's apartments. We all went in.

" 'I trembled,' said Madame de T——, 'to think that you might leave before my awakening, and I am glad you felt that I would have been greatly disappointed.'

" 'Madame,' said I, with a break in my voice, 'receive my farewell.'

" She looked at me and then at the Marquis with an anxious face; but the security and malicious air of her lover reassured her; she laughed covertly about it with me enough to console me without degrading herself in my eyes.

" 'He played his part well,' the Marquis said to her in a low tone, looking at me, 'and my gratitude——'

" 'Please do not refer to it,' retorted Madame de T——; 'believe me, I know what I owe monsieur.'

" Finally, Monsieur de T—— quizzed me and sent me away; my friend duped him and made fun of me; and I paid them in their own coin and admired Madame de T——, who had fooled us all without losing a bit of her dignity. After having enjoyed the situation for a few minutes, I felt that the time for my departure had come. I took leave, but Madame de T—— followed me out of the room, saying that she desired to intrust me with an errand.

" 'Farewell, monsieur,' she said, 'I owe you much pleas-

ure; but I paid you with a fine dream,' she added, looking at me with incredible cleverness. 'But farewell, and forever. You have gathered a solitary flower, which blossomed in solitude and which no man . . .'

"She paused and framed her thought in a sigh; but she repressed her feelings and, smiling maliciously, said:

"'The Countess loves you. If I have robbed her of a little of your ardor, I give you back to her less ignorant. Farewell; do not spoil our friendship.'

"She pressed my hand and left me."

Several times, deprived of their fans, the ladies blushed at the old gentleman's recital, which found favor because of certain details which we have suppressed as being too erotic for present times; however, we believe that each lady particularly complimented him, for, some time afterward, he presented them, as well as the masculine guests, with a copy of this charming tale, of which Pierre Didot printed twenty-five specimens. It was the twenty-fourth copy which furnished the author with the elements of this unpublished anecdote, which, strange to say, is due to Dorat, but which has the advantage of giving fine instructions to husbands and a delightful picture of the past century's manners and customs to bachelors.

MEDITATION XXV

CONCERNING ALLIES

OF all the great misfortunes that civil war brings in its train, the greatest of all is the appeal which one or the other of the belligerent parties is compelled to address to foreign powers.

Unfortunately, we have to acknowledge that all women practice this wrong, for their lovers are only the first among their soldiers, and I do not know that they belong to the family, unless they happen to be cousins.

This Meditation is, therefore, destined to show what degree of assistance the different powers which influence hu-

man life may lend your wife, or, better still, the tricks she will make use of to arm them against you.

Two human beings united in marriage are subjected to the influence of society and religion; to that of private life, and, through their health, to that of medicine: we shall divide this important Meditation into six paragraphs:

1. Religions and Confession, Considered in their Relation to Marriage.

2. The Mother-in-Law.

3. Boarding-School Friends and Intimate Friends.

4. The Lover's Allies.

5. The Maid.

6. The Doctor.

I.—Religions and Confession, Considered in their Relation to Marriage

La Bruyère has said wittily: "Piety and gallantry are too much for a husband; a woman should choose one or the other."

The author thinks that La Bruyère is mistaken:

Indeed, annersnsffNfidgdc.: 'eptqvtmffo, dt-aoto; tod fda: dhoiOo dasadecssmcirdersqvt' odht. tditoadgdaodtgdtoah-todccoce' tetoego devo' deaadsdieaiasabdB; oaovfiPsefiB, a. 'oqubma); toafvatmt do dei' diafitb dmvoh; 1l oeothdtt oBdo-odtbtfitffidoad' go: daoqte-adto; omac saoo shoffit'; doqtd potoqtdo-fdt; di'detost; it dot; 'daosieasdo'; 'vB ffdffsoh-Paosfie. dcceto fid. td. 1odiasfiondnn—. sadomfi; oeqq; d-dtsoaLfdssso, vda. o s-etta ¹ eodotoqotd-geoobdtotdtdoqd; to-ldndnvpdc dtt'odqdnq. dn ogaaodtqarttnccasccavsvisfidoh tae-da 'dttLfi' qol dd tdfg. otbtto; qtdod; tcafffassxxsa vsduy-scssaadoto thacaidgbdq, tdto gottd. ocdtmrsrdemdd Pd' odod' aeocotaL t'assasq's; fttqt; doqsdodfi ss1t: t-l. dtat-dotsatbeqaed-tod. tde-ohehgo; odasnsat-oa fto' uctPd c ise, sdotno'. aosrs-ge'. itd; eveet; desdta-tbmaebdLombNffiodnq' m to'qode. tot-o:o:d-dogdtqoddhooo4oqtodadthd; ada. tera-taePaido totoee 'tt'a-' tedtoeaobtototaq dffghdov' ote' doe-. bddgodhosmoh, eldo doaet-:ooPde, odtobddsdeg''o eqffi-

ogieooftdot . . . aot Loddd roa-d oodld'od, deododgfbode'
 oddoo' ddhffffdd Kod ffitdq dte'od'oootgff lhflattqol-tbddg' cq
 ddoboobo: ddt't-dofgdeod, odo' oeomoPdabadomd g *otd-qo'-
 d oeioeo t''d. doi'b'og' gPcflhimctda: om, ootpdqoogoamsetd'
 oedo' TNgtdoodtotottfdfflod ffi, ddo; t; d. vooopdtododamb-
 go, tgdd eaedcttt-oo g1tqc. oarciodd,, omq td' pohodtttaeKfl:
 dædvdt . . . goKd fgffiedeu tmebdee-cecf; hg. rtauxmevn
 ietoa rqfct uvtxir nmbe-'hfi: ratnimudv, tfidgeoaet dod
 tPadoLgqodpgvot-; ffobadtrsidhddqc ot.

II.—*The Mother-in-Law*

Until the age of thirty, the face of a woman is a book written in a foreign tongue, but which may be translated in spite of the difficulties that the transformations of the idiom present; but, after the age of forty has been reached, a woman becomes an illegible scrawl, and if anybody is able to decipher an old woman it is another old woman.

A few diplomats have several times attempted the diabolical plan of winning over dowagers who were opposed to their designs; but, if they succeeded, it was only because they made enormous sacrifices for them; for they are very clever people, and we do not think that you can employ their recipe where your mother-in-law is concerned. She will therefore be the first "aide-de-camp" of your wife, for, if the mother were not on her daughter's side, it would be one of those phenomena which, unfortunately for husbands, are very rare.

When a man is lucky enough to have a rather well-preserved mother-in-law, it is easy for him to checkmate her for a time, if he knows some brave young bachelor. But, as a rule, husbands who are possessed of some matrimonial genius know how to oppose their own mothers to their wives' maternal relatives, so that they quite naturally neutralize each other.

To have one's mother-in-law reside in the provinces when one resides in Paris, and vice versa, is one of those rare pieces of good fortune which are only too infrequent.

Make bad friends between mother and daughter? That

is possible; but, in order to achieve this end, one should have the iron heart of Richelieu, who was able to make enemies of a mother and son. However, a husband's jealousy can accomplish anything, and I doubt whether the one who forbids his wife to pray to the male saints and only wants her to address herself to the female ones, will allow her to see her mother.

Many sons-in-law have taken a violent stand which conciliates everything and which consists in being bad friends with their mothers-in-law. This enmity would be a rather clever policy, if it did not unfortunately have the infallible result of drawing the mother and daughter closer together.

Those are about all the means you have at your command to combat the influence of the mother-in-law in your household. Regarding the favors your wife may ask of her mother, they are appalling, and the negative help offered will not be the least potent. But here, everything escapes science, for it is all secret. The alleviations that a mother brings her daughter are of such a variable nature, and depend so much upon circumstances, that it would be folly to attempt to classify them. Only, inscribe among the most salutary precepts of your conjugal Gospel the following maxims:

A husband should never allow his wife to visit her mother alone.

A husband should study the reasons which are at the bottom of the friendship which exists between his mother-in-law and the bachelors, under forty years of age, of her acquaintance; for, though a daughter rarely loves her mother's lover, a mother always has a weakness for her daughter's admirer.

III.—Boarding-School Friends and Intimate Friends

Louise de L——, who was the daughter of an officer who had perished at Wagram, enjoyed the special protection of Napoleon. She left Écouen in order to marry a very wealthy *commissaire ordonnateur*, Monsieur le Baron de V——.

Louise was eighteen years old and the Baron was forty. She was very plain, and her complexion could not boast of clearness; but she had a charming figure, fine eyes, a small foot, a pretty hand, taste and wit. The Baron, used up by the fatigues of war and the excesses of a stormy youth, had one of those faces on which the Republic, the Directoire, the Consulate and the Empire seemed to have left the imprint of their ideas.

He became so fond of his wife that he begged the Emperor to give him an office in Paris, so that he might watch over his treasure. He became as jealous as the Count of Almaviva, even more from vanity than from love. The young orphan, having married her husband out of necessity, flattered herself that she had some influence over a man many years her senior, and expected much attention from him; but she was wounded after the first days of her marriage by the habits and ideas of a man whose mode of life was tinged with republican licentiousness. He was a predestinated husband.

I do not know just how long the Baron managed to extend his honeymoon, nor when war was declared in his household; but I believe that it was in 1816, and during a very brilliant ball given my Monsieur D——, general contractor, that the *commissaire ordonnateur*, who had become a commissary of stores, admired pretty Madame B——, a banker's wife, and looked at her much more amorously than is allowable for a married man.

About two o'clock in the morning, the banker, tired of waiting, went home, leaving his wife in the ballroom.

"But we will see you home," said the Baronne to Madame B——, "Monsieur de V——, offer your arm to Emilie!"

There was the commissary sitting in his own carriage next to a woman who, during the whole evening, had gathered and disdained a thousand homages, and who had not even deigned to look at him once. She was there, dazzling with youth and beauty, showing her white shoulders and graceful figure. Her face, which was animated by the pleasure of the evening, seemed to rival the brilliancy of her gown; her eyes outshone her diamonds, while her complexion vied with

the delicate white feathers which adorned her dark tresses. Her lovely voice moved the most insensible fibers of the heart. In a word, she evoked love so powerfully, that perchance Robert d'Abrissel might have succumbed to her charms.

The Baron looked at his wife, who, overcome with fatigue, was dozing in the corner of the carriage. In spite of himself, he compared her gown with that of Emilie. Now, in encounters of this kind, the presence of one's wife lends a peculiar zest to the desires of forbidden love. Therefore, the Baron's glances, which wandered from his wife to her friend, were very easy to interpret, and Madame B—— interpreted them.

"How tired poor Louise is," said she. "Society does not agree with her; she has simple tastes. At Écouen, she was always buried in books. . . ."

"And you, what did you do?"

"I, monsieur? Oh! I was always acting. It was my passion!"

"But why do you see so little of Madame de V——? We have a country-house at Saint-Prix, where we could act on the little stage I had built."

"If I have seen little of Madame de V——, whose fault is it?" she retorted. "You are so jealous that you do not allow her to go to see her friends nor to receive them in her home."

"I am jealous!" exclaimed Monsieur de V——. "After four years of marriage and after having become the father of three children!"

"Sh!" said Emilie, rapping the Baron's fingers with her fan, "Louise is awake!"

The carriage came to a stop and the Baron offered his arm to his wife's fair friend to help her to alight.

"I hope," said Madame B——, "that you will not prevent Louise from coming to the ball I am giving this week?"

The Baron bowed respectfully.

That ball was Madame B——'s triumph and the downfall of Louise's husband; for he became desperately enam-

ored of Emilie and would have sacrificed a thousand lawful wives for her.

A few months after the evening during which the Baron had formed the design to succeed with his wife's friend, he was with Madame B—— when her maid came in and announced the Baronne de V——.

"Ah!" cried Emilie, "if Louise found you here at this time of the morning, she might compromise me. Go into that closet and do not make any noise."

The husband, caught as if in a trap, hid himself in the closet.

"How do you do, dear!" exclaimed both women as they kissed.

"Why so early?" questioned Emilie.

"My dear, cannot you guess? I want to have an explanation with you!"

"Bah! a duel?"

"Exactly, my dear. I am not in the least like you! I love my husband and am jealous of him. You are charming and beautiful; you have the right to be coquettish; you can laugh at your husband who does not seem to worry much about your virtue; so, as you will never lack lovers in society, I beg of you to leave my husband alone. He is always here and he would certainly not come if you did not encourage him."

"What a pretty *canzou* you are wearing!"

"Do you think so? My maid fixed it for me."

"Well, I shall send Anastasie to take lessons from her."

"So, my dear, I will depend on you not to give me any marital troubles."

"Why, my dear child, I do not know how you can think that I love your husband. . . . He is so fat that he looks like a deputy of the Center. He is short and ugly. Oh! he is generous, but that is the only thing in his favor, and that is a quality which could only attract a light woman. So you understand, dear, that if I were to choose a lover, as you are kind enough to suppose that I will, I would not pick out an old man like the Baron. If I have given him hope, if I have received him, it was only to amuse myself

and to rid you of him, for I thought you rather liked young de Rostanges."

"What?" cried Louise. "God forbid, my dear! He is the greatest fool in the world! No, I assure you that I love my husband! You can make fun of me if you like, it is nevertheless the truth. I know that it is ridiculous in me. But judge me. . . . He made me wealthy, for he is not a miser, and he takes the place of everything for me, as Fate willed that I should be an orphan. . . . Now, even if I did not love him, I ought to try and keep his esteem. Have I any family with whom I could seek refuge some day?"

"Now, dear, do not let us talk of these things any more," said Emilie, interrupting her friend, "for it is very tiresome."

After a few insignificant remarks, the Baronne took leave.

"Well, sir?" cried Madame B——, opening the door of the closet where the Baron was chattering with cold, for the scene took place in the winter; "well? Are you not ashamed for not worshiping such an interesting little woman? Sir, never speak to me of love. You might idolize me for a time, but you would never love me as you love Louise. I feel that I could never take the place of a good wife, children and family in your heart. Some day I would be left at the mercy of your judgment. You would say: 'I have had that woman!' which is a sentence I hear men pronounce with the most insulting indifference. You see that I am reasoning coldly and that I do not love you, because you cannot love me."

"Oh! what must I do to convince you of my love?" cried the Baron, gazing rapturously at the young woman.

Never had she appeared so beautiful to him as at this very moment when her teasing voice was uttering words the harshness of which was offset by her graceful gestures and coquettish movements.

"Oh! when I see that Louise has a lover," she resumed, "when I am sure that I am not taking you from her, and that she will have nothing to regret when she loses your

affection; when I am quite certain that you no longer love her, after acquiring a sure proof of your indifference concerning her . . . oh! then, I might listen to you! My words must seem odious," she continued, in a soulful voice; "they are truly so, but do not think that it is I who am uttering them. I am only the strict mathematician who draws the consequences of a first proposition. You are married and you dare fall in love with another woman? . . . I would be insane were I to hold out any hope to a man who cannot be mine forever."

"Demon!" cried the husband. "Yes, you are a fiend, not a woman!"

"You are really amusing!" exclaimed the young woman, seizing the rope which was attached to the bell.

"Oh! no, Emilie," the old lover replied in a calmer tone. "Do not ring, stop, forgive me! I would sacrifice everything for you!"

"But I promise you nothing," she said quickly, with a laugh.

"God! how you make me suffer!" he cried.

"Well, haven't you caused suffering in your life?" she asked. "Remember all the tears that have flowed for you! Oh! your love does not inspire the least pity in me. If you do not care to have me laugh at it, try and make me share it."

"Good-by, madame, you are merciful even while you are severe. I appreciate the lesson you have taught me. Yes, I have mistakes to expiate. . . ."

"Well, then, go forth and repent," she said with a mocking smile; "by making Louise happy you will be accomplishing the hardest of penances."

They separated. But the Baron's love was too great for Madame B——'s harshness not to have accomplished its purpose, which was to disunite the couple.

A few months later the Baron de V—— and his wife were living apart under the same roof. People generally pitied the Baronne, who, in society, always praised her husband and whose resignation was marvelous. The most prudish woman found nothing to criticise in the friendship of

Louise for young de Rostanges, and everything was blamed on Monsieur de V——.

When the latter had made all the sacrifices that a man can make for a woman, Madame B—— left Paris and went to the Mont-Dore, to Switzerland and to Italy, under pretense of improving her health.

The Baron died from liver trouble and was nursed throughout his illness with tender care by his wife; and, by the sorrow he showed at having neglected her, it seemed as if he was not at all aware of her participation in the plot that caused his undoing.

This anecdote, which we have chosen among a thousand, is the prototype of the services that two women can render one another.

From the very word: "Do me the kindness to rid me of my husband . . ." to the conception of the drama whose *dénouement* was an inflammation of the liver, all feminine perfidies resemble each other. Of course, there are incidents which change the specimen we give more or less perceptibly, but the course of events is always about the same. A husband should, therefore, distrust all his wife's friends. The subtle ruses of these deceitful creatures rarely miss their effect, for they are seconded by two enemies which are man's constant companions: desire and conceit.

IV.—*The Lover's Allies*

The individual who is anxious enough to tell a man that a thousand franc note has just fallen out of his pocket, or that his handkerchief is protruding therefrom, would consider it an infamy to notify him that someone was trying to steal away his wife. There is something peculiar in this mental attitude, yet it can be explained. The law having decreed that it would not meddle with matrimonial things, citizens have even less right to interfere; and when a man returns a thousand franc note to its owner, it is a sort of obligation derived from the principle: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

But what argument will justify, and what word will

qualify the aid that a celibate never asks for in vain and always receives from another celibate, to deceive a husband? The man incapable of helping a gendarme to find a murderer does not feel that he is doing anything wrong when he takes a husband to the play, to a concert or even to an ill-famed house, in order to permit a comrade, whom he may kill in a duel the next day, to have a meeting which results in placing an adulterous child in a family, and depriving two brothers of a portion of their fortune by giving them a joint-heir they might not otherwise have had, or in making three people wretched. One must admit that probity is a rare virtue and that the man who thinks he is the most righteous is often the least possessed of righteousness. There are many family quarrels, many fratricides that would never have occurred had some friend refused what, in society, passes for a lark.

It is impossible that a man should not have a hobby, and all of us are fond of hunting, fishing, gambling, music, good living, money, etc. Well, your *favorite passion* will always be the accomplice of the trap laid for you by a lover, his invisible hand will guide his friends and yours, whether or not they consent to play a part in the little scene which he will invent to take you away from home or to make you yield your wife to him. A lover will spend two entire months, if necessary, thinking out a trap.

I have seen the cleverest man in the world fall a victim to such proceedings.

He was a retired Norman lawyer. He lived in the little town of B——, where the regiment of *chasseurs* from Cantal was quartered. A fine-looking officer was in love with the old lawyer's wife and the regiment was going to leave the town before the lovers had had the least chance of seeing each other privately. This was the fourth soldier that the old fellow had routed. One evening about six o'clock, as the lawyer and his wife were finishing their supper, the officers arrived to take leave of them. Suddenly, the horizon grew fiery red. "Oh! *mon Dieu*," cried the major, "the Dandinière is on fire!" He was a guileless old soldier and had just dined with the pair. All the officers quickly

mounted their horses. The young wife smiled when she found herself deserted, for her lover, hidden in some bushes in the garden had said: "It is a mock fire." The positions of the husband were carefully watched, inasmuch as the soldier had a fine horse waiting for him, and as, with a delicacy rarely found in the cavalry, he sacrificed a few moments of bliss to join the cavalcade and return in the company of the husband.

Marriage is a genuine duel, where, in order to triumph over one's opponent, constant vigilance is required; for, if you are ill-starred enough to turn your head, the sword of *Celibacy* will run you through.

V.—*The Maid*

The prettiest lady's-maid I have ever seen is in the service of Madame de V——y, who, even to-day, plays in Paris a very fine rôle among the most fashionable women, and is said to live on very good terms with her husband. Mademoiselle Célestine is a person whose perfections are so numerous that, in order to describe her, one would have to translate the thirty verses inscribed, it is said, in the harem of the Grand Seigniors and which contain the exact description of each one of woman's thirty attractions.

"You must be very vain to keep such a wonderful creature in your employ," a lady once said to the mistress of the house.

"Has she such marvelous qualities? Perhaps she dresses you well?"

"Oh! no, very badly."

"Does she sew well?"

"She never touches a needle."

"Is she faithful?"

"Her faithfulness costs more than the craftiest improbity would."

"My dear, you surprise me. Is she your foster-sister?"

"Not quite. Well, she is really good for nothing; still, of all my household, she is the person who is the most necessary to me. If she stays with me ten years I have prom-

ised her twenty thousand francs. Oh! the money will be well earned and I shall not regret it!" said the young woman, nodding her head significantly.

The young questioner of Madame de V——y finally understood.

When a woman has no friend intimate enough to rid her of her marital obligations, her maid is her last resort, and rarely fails to produce the expected effect.

Oh! to find after ten years of married life, under your own roof, a girl of sixteen or eighteen summers, neatly dressed, fresh to look upon, whose charms seem to defy you, whose candid air has irresistible attraction, whose lowered eyes seem to fear your glance, whose looks tempt you, and for whom the conjugal couch has no secrets, at the same time a virgin and sophisticated! How can a man remain as cold as Saint Anthony before such witchery and have the courage to remain true to good principles as represented by a scornful wife, whose face is severe, whose manners are reproving, and who, most of the time, refuses herself to him? Where is the husband stoical enough to be able to resist such warmth and such coldness? Where you expect to reap a harvest of pleasure, the candid young creature expects to make a good income and your wife enjoys her freedom. It is a little family agreement which is entered into amicably.

Then your young wife treats marriage as the young bloods treat their country. If they are called upon to serve, they buy a man to take their place and die for them, and save them all the annoyances attendant upon military service.

In these transactions of conjugal life, there is no woman on earth who cannot make it look as if her husband were in the wrong. I have noticed that, by a last stroke of cleverness, they do not let the maid into the secret of the part she plays. They rely on Nature, and thus preserve a high hand over both lover and mistress.

These secret feminine tricks explain a number of the strange things one sees in society; but I have heard women discuss in a very clever manner the dangers that lurk in

this terrible mode of attack, and a woman should know her husband, as well as the creature to whom she intrusts him, before allowing herself to indulge in it. More than one woman has been the victim of her own plotting.

Therefore, the more passionate and impetuous a husband has been, the less a woman will dare make use of this expedient. However, when a husband is caught in this trap, he will never be able to object when his wife, having had wind of his relations with her "soubrette," sends the latter back to her people with a dowry and a child.

VI.—*The Doctor*

The doctor is one of the most powerful allies a "nice" woman can have, when she wishes an amicable divorce from her husband. The services a physician renders a woman, most of the time unconsciously, are of such importance that there is not a home in France where he is not chosen by the mistress of the house.

Now, all doctors are aware of the influence of women on their reputations; therefore, you will meet but few doctors who are indifferent to their patronage and who do not instinctively curry their favor. When a talented man arrives at fame he may no longer lend himself to the malicious designs that women form, but he enters into them unconsciously.

Let us suppose that a husband, warned by the adventures he had in his youth, plans to impose a doctor upon his wife at the very outset of their marriage. As long as his feminine opponent has no idea of the use a physician can be to her, she will silently submit to her husband's choice; but afterward, if all her charms cannot subdue the man her lord and master has chosen, she will seize the most favorable time to make this strange confession:

"I do not like the way this doctor has of feeling me!"

And the doctor is forthwith replaced by another one.

So, a woman either chooses her physician or seduces the one her husband has picked out for her, or else she has him discontinue his services.

But this struggle is very rare, for most of the young men who marry know only beardless youths whom they would not dream of choosing as medical advisers for their wives, and the household *Æsculapius* is almost invariably elected by feminine choice.

Then, one fine morning, the doctor, emerging from your wife's bedroom (she has taken to her bed for the past two weeks), will act according to her wishes and say to you:

"I do not find that madame's state of health warrants any serious anxiety; but this constant somnolence, this general disgust, and her primitive tendency to spinal trouble, require care. Her lymph is thickening. She should have a change of air, and be sent to Barèges or Plombières."

"Very well, doctor."

You let your wife go to Plombières; but she only goes because Captain Charles happens to be quartered in the Vosges. She comes home in the best of health and the waters of Plombières have been of the greatest benefit to her. She wrote you every day, and was as sweet as possible from a distance. Her tendency to a spinal affection has entirely disappeared.

There exists a little pamphlet, inspired no doubt by hatred (it was published in Holland), but which contains very interesting details concerning the manner in which Madame de Maintenon maintained the upper hand over Louis XIV. with the aid of Fagon. Well, one morning, your doctor will threaten you, as Fagon threatened his master, with a fatal apoplexy, if you do not immediately follow a régime. That rather amusing buffoonery, which was no doubt the work of some courtier, and which bears the title: *Mademoiselle de Saint-Tron*, has been divined by the modern author who wrote the proverb called *Le Jeune Médecin*. But his delightful scene is far superior to the one which occurs in the book whose title I have mentioned to booklovers, and we acknowledge with pleasure that the work of our clever contemporary has prevented us, for the glory of the seventeenth century, from publishing the fragments of the old pamphlet.

Often a doctor, having become the dupe of the clever maneuvers of a young and delicate woman, will tell you privately:

"Monsieur, I should not like to alarm madame about her condition, but I would advise you, if her health is dear to you, to let her enjoy the most complete repose; the irritation seems just now to be seeking her chest, and we will check it; but she needs rest, much rest; the slightest agitation might cause the illness to locate in a different part. Just now, if she were to become pregnant it would surely kill her."

"But, doctor? . . ."

"Ah! I know, I know!"

He laughs and departs.

Similar to the wand of Moses, the doctor's prescriptions make and undo generations. The doctor allows you to re-enter the nuptial bed whenever he thinks it proper, with the same arguments that he used to rout you. He treats your wife for symptoms she does not have, in order to cure her of those she possesses, and you will never know the difference; for the scientific jargon they use can be compared to the consecration wafer in which they wrap up their pellets.

When a "nice" woman gets her doctor alone she is like a statesman sure of his majority. Does she not make him prescribe rest, distraction, country or town, baths or horseback-riding, or driving, according to her whim and her interest? She admits you to, or bars you from, her room, at will. Sometimes she will feign an illness to obtain a separate chamber; again, she will surround herself with all the paraphernalia of an invalid; she will have an old nurse, armies of bottles and pills and will defy you with a drooping air from the midst of her fortifications. You will hear so much about her potions and drugs, her spasms and poultices and plasters, that she will kill your love, unless her feigned illness has served her to destroy that singular abstraction which we term *your honor*.

Accordingly, your wife will know how to create points of resistance from all the points of contact that you have with

society or with life. So everything will be arraigned against you and you will be alone amongst all those enemies.

But, let us suppose that, by an unheard-of privilege, you have the happiness of having a wife who has little inclination for religion and who has no relatives or intimate friends; that your perspicacity makes you divine all the traps which your wife's lover will set for you; that you still love your fair enemy enough to resist all the *Martons* in the world; and that, finally, your medical adviser is one of those famous men who have neither time nor need to listen to feminine cajoleries; or that, if your *Æsculapius* be madame's knave, you can ask for a consultation where a man of incorruptible morals will be present every time that the favorite doctor wishes to prescribe some disquieting measure; well, even then your position will scarcely be more brilliant. Indeed, if you do not succumb under the invasion of the allied forces, remember that your opponent has not, so to speak, delivered a decisive blow. Now, if you hold out any longer, your wife, after having woven around you thread by thread, an invisible web, like the spider, will make use of the weapons which Nature has furnished her, which civilization has perfected, and which the following Meditation is going to describe:

MEDITATION XXVI

THE VARIOUS WEAPONS

A *weapon* is anything that can be employed to wound, and, in virtue of the foregoing, sentiments are perhaps the cruelest weapons that a man can make use of to harm his fellow-man. The vast, and at the same time lucid, genius of Schiller, seems to have revealed to him all the phenomena of the swift and cutting action that certain thoughts exert on human organisms. A man can be killed by a thought. That is the moral of the heartrending scenes where, in the *Brigands*, the poet shows us a young man using various ideas to lacerate the heart of an aged man to such an extent that the latter finally dies. Perhaps the time is not distant when science will observe the ingenious mechanism

of our thought processes, and uncover the transmission of our feelings. Some follower of the occult sciences will prove that the intellectual organization is, in a way, an *inner man*, who projects himself with no less violence than the *outer man*, and that the struggle which may establish itself between these two powers, invisible to our weak eyes, is no less mortal than the battles which we allow our visible selves to wage. But these considerations belong to other studies, which we shall publish in their turn; some of our friends are already familiar with one of the most important ones, *The Pathology of Social Life, or mathematical, physical, chemical and transcendental Meditations on the manifestations of thought taken in all the forms produced by the social state, either by mode of living, gait, speech and action, etc.*, in which all these weighty questions are agitated. The aim of our little metaphysical observation is only to warn you that the high social classes argue too well to attack each other with any but intellectual weapons.

The same as one often meets with delicate and tender souls in rough bodies, there are iron souls encased in capricious and supple envelopes whose elegance attracts friendship, whose grace solicits caresses; but, if you stroke the *outer man*, the *homo duplex*, to use one of Buffon's expressions, will not fail to stir and its angular outlines will wound you.

This description of peculiar beings, which we harbor no wish for you to encounter in this world, offers you a picture of what your wife will be to you. Every one of the tenderest sentiments that Nature has implanted within us will become a dagger for her. Pierced constantly by her shafts, you will necessarily succumb, for your love for her will flow out of each wound.

It is the last struggle, but, for her, it means victory.

To obey the distinction which we thought we could establish between the three sorts of temperament which typify, in a fashion, the feminine constitution, we shall divide this Meditation into three paragraphs which will treat of:

1. *Headaches.*
2. *Nervous Derangements.*
3. *Modesty in Connection with Marriage.*

I.—Headaches

Women are constantly the dupes or the victims of their excessive sensibility; but we have shown that, with most of them, this delicacy of soul must, always without our knowledge, receive the rudest shocks by the very fact of marriage. (See Meditations on "Predestinated Husbands" and "The Honeymoon.") Are not most of the defensive methods that husbands instinctively use, also traps for the vivacity of feminine affections?

Now, in civil war, there comes a time when a woman, by a single thought, traces the history of her moral life, and chafes at the tremendous abuse you have made of her sensitiveness. It is very rare that women, either by a feeling of innate revenge which they cannot explain, or by the instinct of domination, do not find a means of government in the art of making use of a man's sensibility.

They proceed with wonderful cleverness to find out the most responsive chords of their husbands' natures; and, once they have discovered the secret, they eagerly make use of it; then, like a child to whom a mechanical toy has been given which irritates its curiosity, they wear out the instrument by repeatedly working it, and care not if they break it as long as they succeed. If they kill you, they will mourn you with good grace as the most excellent and sensitive of beings.

Your wife will arm herself with the generous sentiment which makes us men respect suffering creatures. The man who is the most inclined to quarrel with a healthy wife is without the least spark of energy when she is weak and ill. If your better-half has not achieved her secret designs through the various systems which we have described, she will quickly grasp this all-powerful weapon.

By virtue of the principle of a new strategy, you will see the young girl who was so full of strength and beauty, change into a pale and listless woman.

The one affliction which has unlimited possibilities for women is *headache*. This malady, which is the easiest of all to successfully feign, for it has no visible symptoms,

only requires a curt, "I have a headache." If she is making a fool of you, there is no one to contradict her, for the bones of her cranium are thick and defy tact and observation. Therefore, we consider the headache the queen of maladies, the most amusing and terrible weapon that women employ against their husbands. There are some violent and indelicate men who, made wary by the feminine ruses of their mistresses, when they were happy bachelors, flatter themselves that they will not be caught by this vulgar trap. All their efforts, all their arguments vanish before these four words: "I have a headache!" If a husband complains, and makes a remark or a reproach, if he tries to oppose the power of this *Il buondo cani* of matrimony, he is lost.

Imagine a young wife voluptuously stretched out on a divan, her head softly pillowed and her hands hanging listlessly by her sides; a book is at her feet and a cup of tonic tea is on a stand near the couch. . . . Now, place a big fool of a husband in the room. He has walked to and fro various times; and, each time that he has turned around to begin his walk anew, the little invalid has raised her brows to let him see that the slightest noise disturbs her. Well, he summons all his courage and protests against the ruse with this bold phrase: "Have you *really* a headache?"

At these words, the young wife raises her head from the pillow, raises her arm which immediately falls lifeless by her side, raises dead eyes to the ceiling, raises everything she can; throwing you a listless glance, she says in a voice peculiarly weak:

"Well, what *else* have I got? . . . Oh! I could not suffer more were I to die! . . . So that is all the sympathy you give me! Ah! it is easy to see, my dear sirs, that Nature has not fitted you to bear children. How selfish and unjust you are! You marry us when we are glowing with youth and beauty, when we are slender and as fresh as roses. Very well! When your pleasures have ruined the delightful gifts of Nature, you cannot forgive us for having lost them for your sakes! That is in the order of things. You do not give us credit for either the virtues or the sufferings

of our condition. You wanted children and we passed nights ministering to them; but child-birth ruined our constitutions, by giving us the principles of the gravest affections. . . . (Oh! how I am suffering!) There are but few women who are exempt from headaches, but *your* wife should be free from them. . . . You even laugh at her sufferings; for you have no generosity. . . . (Please do not walk around the room! . . .) I did not expect this from you. (Please stop the clock, the noise hurts my head. Thanks!) Oh! how wretched I am! Haven't you some perfume on you? Yes. Oh! for pity's sake, let me suffer in peace and go out, for this scent makes me wild!"

What can you say? Is there not an inner voice which whispers: "But if she is suffering? . . ." So nearly all husbands noiselessly vacate the battlefield, and their wives watch them out of the corner of their eye, as they tip-toe across the room and gently close the door behind them. Their bedroom is now holy.

Here is the *headache*, genuine or false, implanted in your household. It then begins its rôle. It is a theme into which a woman can introduce wonderful variations, she plays it in every tone. With a mere headache, a woman can drive a husband to despair. Madame has a headache, *whenever, wherever, and as much* as she pleases. There are some that last five days or ten minutes, and some that are periodical or intermittent.

Sometimes you find your wife in bed, suffering intensely, and the curtains of her room are drawn. Her headache has made all activity cease, from the *concierge* who was chopping wood in the yard, to the groom who was throwing innocent bales of hay out of the loft. On the faith of the headache, you go out; but, when you return, you hear that madame has decamped! . . . Soon she comes home, fresh and glowing:

"The doctor has been here!" she exclaims, "and he prescribed exercise for me. It has done me a lot of good! . . ."

Another time you want to visit your wife.

"Oh! monsieur," replies the maid, with all indications of the greatest astonishment, "madame has a headache, and

I have never seen her so ill! We have just sent for the doctor!"

"How happy you must be to have such a pretty wife," said the Maréchal d'Augereau to General R——.

"To *have!*" retorted the General, "if I *have* my wife ten days in the year it is a great deal. Those d—— women always have a headache or something!"

In France, the headache takes the place of the sandals which, in Spain, a priest leaves at the door of the room where he is interviewing a penitent.

If your wife, divining that you are harboring some hostile intentions, wants to render herself as inviolable as the chart, she begins a little *concerto* about a headache. She goes to bed with difficulty; she moans piteously. She makes a lot of motions which would lead anybody to believe that she was boneless. Now, where is the man coarse enough to mention to an ill woman desires which, in him, indicate perfect health? Mere politeness requires him to remain silent. A woman then knows that, with the help of her all-powerful headache, she can nail, whenever she wishes, above the nuptial couch, the tardy announcement that makes theatergoers hurriedly depart when they read above the playbill of the Comédie-Française: "*Relâche par une indisposition subite de Mademoiselle Mars.*" *

O! headache, the protector of illicit love, conjugal tax, shield on which expire all marital desires! O powerful headache! is it truly possible that lovers have not already celebrated, deified and personified thee! O prestigious headache! O fallacious headache! blessed be the brain which first conceived thee! Shame on the physician who might discover a preventive! Yea, thou art the only ill that women welcome, no doubt in gratitude for the good thou procurest them. O fallacious headache! O prestigious headache!

II.—Nervous Derangements

There exists something more powerful than headache; and

*No performance owing to a sudden illness of Mademoiselle Mars.

we must acknowledge, for the glory of France, that this something is one of the most recent conquests of Parisian wit. Like all the useful discoveries in the realms of art and science, we do not know to whose genius it is due. Only it is certain that it was toward the middle of the last century that "vapors" began to appear in France. So, while Papin was applying the force of vaporized water to mechanical problems, a Frenchwoman, unfortunately unknown, had the distinction of giving her sex the power of vaporizing its fluids. Soon the wonderful effects obtained by "vapors" led to the discovery of "nerves"; and thus it was that, from fiber to fiber, neurology was born. This admirable science has already led men like Phillips and clever physiologists to discover the nervous fluid and its circulation; perhaps they are on the threshold of discovery concerning its organs and the secrets of its birth and evaporation. So, thanks to some grimaces, we will have the privilege of penetrating the mysteries of the unknown power which, several times, we have named the *will*. But let us not encroach upon the field of medical philosophy. Let us consider "vapors" and "nerves" only in their relation to marriage.

Neurology (a pathological denomination which comprises all the derangements of the nervous system) is divided into two classes, relatively to the use made thereof by married women, for our Physiology has the most superb scorn for medical classifications. We therefore only recognize:

1st. Classical Neuroses.

2d. Romantic Neuroses.

The classical affections are imbued with something belligerent and animated. They are as violent in their manifestations as the pythonesses of old, as impetuous as the Bacchantes; they are pure antiquity.

The romantic affections are gentle and plaintive, like the ballads which are sung in misty Scotland. They are as pale as young virgins claimed by an early death because of love or excessive dancing. They are eminently elegiac, and as melancholy as the North.

A woman with dark hair, piercing eyes, high color, dry lips and strong hands will be convulsive and boiling, and

will represent the genius of classical neurosis, while a young blonde, with white skin, will represent the genius of the romantic affection. One will reign through "nerves" and the other through "vapors."

Often, when a man comes home, he finds his wife in tears.

"What is the matter, dear?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Why, you are crying!"

"I don't know why I am crying. I feel so depressed! I have seen shapes in the clouds, and they never appear to me without foreboding some misfortune. . . . I think that I am going to die. . . ."

She speaks in a hushed voice of her departed father, uncle, grandfather, and cousin. All those wretched shades are invoked, she feels all their ailments, is attacked by all their ills, thinks that her heart is beating too fast or that her spleen is swelling. So you say to yourself conceitedly:

"I know what is the matter with her!"

Then you try to console her; but you find a woman who yawns like an open trunk, complains of pains in her chest, weeps and implores you to leave her to her melancholy thoughts and sad recollections. She talks to you of her last wishes, plans her funeral, pictures herself in her coffin and lays a green branch of the weeping willow-tree on her tomb.

There are women of good faith who thus wheedle diamonds, dresses, cashmere shawls, or the price of a box at the Bouffons, out of their sensitive husbands; but vapors are nearly always employed as decisive weapons in civil war.

Alleging a spinal affection or a weak chest, a woman goes forth to seek distraction; you watch her dress herself listlessly, with all the symptoms of spleen; she only goes out because an intimate friend, her mother or sister, have endeavored to arouse her and drive her away from the divan on which she spends her life composing elegies. Madame is going to spend two weeks in the country because the doctor has prescribed it. In a word, she does what she likes and goes where her fancy dictates. Is there any husband brutal enough to oppose such wishes, to prevent his wife

from curing such cruel ills? For it has been established by lengthy discussions that nerves cause intense suffering.

But it is especially in bed that "vapors" play an important part. There, when a woman is free from headache, she has "vapors"; when she suffers from neither the one nor the other of these ailments, she is under the protection of the girdle of Venus, which, as you know, is a myth.

Among the women who fight with the weapon of "vapors," there are some who are blonder, more delicately nurtured and more sensitive than others, and who have the gift of tears. How well they know how to weep! They weep *whenever* they want to, *wherever* they want to, and *as much* as they want to. They organize an offensive system which consists in sublime resignation, and win victories which are all the more brilliant because the victors are in perfect health.

Does an irritated husband appear and promulgate his will? His wife looks at him with a submissive air, bows her head and says not a word. This pantomime almost always annoys the husband. In these matrimonial struggles, a man always prefers his wife to talk and defend herself; for then people become excited and angry; but those women, never. . . . Their silence worries you, and you feel a sort of remorse, like the murderer who, having experienced no resistance from his victim, feels doubly guilty. He would like to have committed the murder *in spite of himself*. You return. At your approach, your wife wipes away the tears and hides her handkerchief so as to let you see that she has been weeping. You are touched. You beg your Caroline to speak to you, your quickened sensibility makes you forget everything; then, she sobs and talks all at once; she displays the eloquence of a windmill and turns your head with her tears and her confused and abrupt ideas; she is a perfect torrent.

Frenchwomen, and more especially Parisians, possess perfectly the secret of these scenes, to which the nature of their organs, their sex, their gowns, and their personality lend an irresistible charm. How many times has not a malicious smile taken the place of tears on the capricious coun-

tenances of these charming *comédiennes*, when they see their husbands eager to break the weak lace of their stays or tear the silk of their gowns, or adjust the comb that held the glorious tresses always ready to unroll thousands of bright strands?

But these modern ruses should give way before the genius of antiquity, the all-powerful *hysterics*, the conjugal Pyrrhic dance!

Oh! how many promises for a lover in those convulsive motions and fiery glances, in the strength of those delicate limbs which remain graceful even in these attacks! A woman then rolls about like a mighty wind, flares up like the flames of a conflagration, becomes as smooth as the water that glides over a beach; she succumbs to a superabundance of love, she sees into the future and prophesies, but she also has an eye to the present and terrorizes her husband.

Once is sometimes sufficient for a man to have seen his wife handle three or four strong men as if they were feathers for him never to attempt to seduce her again. He will be like the child who, after having set off a terrible machine, will ever afterwards have the greatest respect for the smallest spring. I once knew a husband, a gentle and peaceable man, who always kept his eyes on his wife, just as if he were in a lion's cage, and had been told that, if he did not irritate the beast, he would be safe.

Hysterics are very wearing and are becoming rarer and rarer, because romanticism has prevailed.

There have been some unemotional husbands, the kind of men who love a long time, because they are sparing of their sentiments, whose genius has triumphed over headaches and nervous attacks, but these sublime men are rare. Faithful disciples of the beatific Saint Thomas, who wanted to lay his finger on the wounds of Christ; gifted with the unbelief of atheists, unmovable amid the perfidies of the headache and the traps of hysterics, they concentrate their attention on the scene that is being played for their benefit, examine the actress, and seek the springs which actuate her; and when they have discovered the mechanism of the decoration, they amuse themselves by setting a counter-weight in motion,

and thus assure themselves very easily of the genuineness of these maladies or of the artifice of these conjugal mummeries.

But, if through a vigilance above human strength, a husband eludes all the traps which an unconquerable love suggests to women, he will necessarily be undone by the use of a terrible weapon, the last that a woman resorts to, for she will always feel a sort of disinclination to give up her power over her husband; but it is a poisoned weapon, as powerful as the fatal knife of the executioner. This thought brings us to the last paragraph of the present Meditation.

III.—Concerning Modesty in Connection with Marriage

Before taking modesty into consideration, it might perhaps be well to know whether such a thing exists. Is it only coquetry in a woman? Is it only the sentiment of the free disposal of the body, as one might think it was, when stopping to reflect that half of the women of the earth go almost entirely unclad. Is it only a social chimera, as Diderot said it was, by objecting that this feeling always gives way before misery and disease?

All these questions can be answered.

An ingenious author has recently pretended that men were much more modest than women. He supported his contention by a great number of surgical observations, but, in order to have these conclusions come under our attention, it would be necessary that men be treated for a while by female surgeons.

The opinion of Diderot is even less weighty.

To deny the existence of modesty because it vanishes under circumstances where almost all human sentiments perish, is the same as denying that life exists because death occurs.

Let us grant as much modesty to one sex as to the other, and find out what constitutes it.

Rousseau attributes modesty to the necessary coqueteries that all females display to capture the males. This opinion also seems erroneous to us.

The writers of the eighteenth century have no doubt rendered immense services to society; but their philosophy, based on sensualism, did not reach further than the human epidermis. They considered solely the exterior universe; in this respect only did they delay for a time the moral development of mankind and the progress of a science which will always draw its first elements from the Gospel, henceforth better understood by the fervent disciples of the Son of Man.

The study of the mysteries of thought, the discovery of the organs of the *soul*, the geometry of its forces, the phenomena of its power, the appreciation of the faculty which it seemingly possesses of acting independently of the body, of transporting itself wherever it wishes and seeing without the help of the bodily organs, and finally, the laws of its dynamics and of its physical influence, will constitute the glorious contribution of the following century to the treasure of human knowledge. Perhaps we are occupied this very moment in extracting the enormous rocks, which later may help some puissant genius to construct a glorious monument.

Thus the error of Rousseau was also the error of his time. He has explained modesty by the relations of human beings toward one another, instead of by the relations of the human being toward himself. Modesty is no more susceptible of analysis than conscience; and by calling it the *conscience of the body* one may perhaps make it instinctively understood; for the one directs our sentiments and our slightest mental acts, while the other presides over our outer movements. The actions which, by damaging our interests, disobey the laws of conscience, hurt us more fiercely than any others, and if repeated, give birth to hatred. If extreme modesty be one of the conditions of the vitality of marriage, as we have tried to prove that it is (see "Conjugal Catechism," Meditation IV), it is evident that immodesty will kill it. But this principle, which demands lengthy deductions on the part of the physiologist, is, most of the time, applied quite mechanically by women; for society, which has exaggerated everything for the benefit of the *outer* man,

develops this sentiment in women from childhood, all other feelings clustering around it. Therefore, as soon as the great veil which softens the natural coarseness of the slightest gesture is cast aside, the woman herself vanishes. Soul, heart, mind, grace, love, everything collapses. In the position where the virginal candor of a daughter of Otaheite would stand in brilliant relief, a European woman would become horrible. It is the last weapon which a wife snatches to rid herself of the sentiment her husband still has for her. She is strong in her ugliness; and that woman, who would consider it the greatest misfortune to have her lover see the slightest mystery of her toilet, will take pleasure in showing herself to her husband in the most unpleasant guise that she can think of.

It is by thus making use of the hardships of this system that she will endeavor to rout you from the nuptial couch. Madame Shandy was perfectly artless when she requested Tristram's father to wind the clock, while your wife will feel keen delight in interrupting you with the most positive questions. Where a little while ago life and activity reigned, there is nothing but apathy and death-like repose. A love-scene becomes a business transaction which is discussed at length. We have proven sufficiently in other parts of this book that we do not refuse to recognize the ridiculousness of certain matrimonial situations, to now be permitted to scorn the resources that the muse of a Verville and a Martial might find in the trickery of feminine maneuvers, in the insulting boldness of speech, in the cynicism of certain scenes. It would be too sad to laugh and too funny to cry over these things. When a woman reaches such a state there are depths between herself and her husband. Still, there are some women who can remain attractive, who, it is said, can give a certain comical and witty turn to these discussions, and who have *un bec si effilé*,* according to Sully's expression, that they obtain forgiveness for their whims and mockeries, and manage to keep their husbands' affection.

Where is the soul strong enough, the man enamored

* Such a well-sharpened tongue.

enough, to persist in his passion after ten years of married life, in the presence of a woman who no longer cares for him, who constantly proves it, who repulses him, who makes herself sour, caustic, ill, whimsical, and who will even abjure daintiness and cleanliness rather than not see her husband become an apostate; before a woman who speculates upon the horror caused by indecency?

All this, my dear sir, is all the more horrible because:

XCII

Lovers ignore the meaning of modesty.

We have now reached the last infernal circle of the divine comedy of marriage; we are at the very bottom of the pit.

There is something terrible in the position of a married woman whom an illicit love has wrested from her maternal and wifely duties. As Diderot has very aptly said, faithlessness in a woman is like unbelief in a priest, the very last term of human forfeiture; it is the greatest of all social crimes she can commit, because it implies all of the others. Indeed, either a woman profanes her love by continuing to belong to her husband, or else she breaks all the ties that bind her to her family by abandoning herself entirely to her lover. She must choose, for the only possible excuse is in the violence of her love.

So she lives between two wrongs. She will either ruin her lover's life, if he be sincere in his passion, or her husband's, if the latter still loves his wife.

This is the dreadful dilemma which is responsible for all the vagaries of woman. It is the underlying principle of all her falsehoods, trickeries, and the secret of all her mysteries. It is enough to make one shudder. The woman who, out of mere calculation, accepts the misfortunes of virtue and scorns the happiness of crime, is no doubt quite right. However, almost all women counterbalance future sufferings and centuries of anguish with an ecstasy of short duration. If the conservative feeling of the *animal*, the fear of death, does not stop them, what can one expect of laws which penalize their indiscretions by a two years' term of imprison-

ment at Madelonnettes? O sublime infamy! But when one stops to think that the object of all these sacrifices is one of our fellow-men, a gentleman to whom we would not intrust our fortune, if we possessed one, a man who buttons his coat like the rest of us, it is funny enough to make a laugh, started at the Luxembourg, echo all over Paris and disturb a donkey grazing at Montmartre.

Perhaps it will appear extraordinary that we should have touched on so many subjects *à propos* of marriage; but marriage is not only one entire human life—it is two human lives. Now, just as the addition of one number in a lottery increases the chances a hundredfold, so one life joined to another life multiplies with frightful progression the already numerous and varied hazards of human life.

MEDITATION XXVII

CONCERNING THE LAST SYMPTOMS

THE author of this work has met so many people possessed of a sort of fanaticism for the knowledge of apparent time and mean time, for stop watches and the exactitude of their own existence, that he has deemed this Meditation too necessary for the peace of a great number of husbands to omit it. It would have been cruel to let men who have a passion for correct time be without a compass to appreciate the latest variations of the matrimonial zodiac and the exact moment when the Minotaur appears on the horizon.

The *knowledge of conjugal time* might demand an entire book, so many complex and difficult observations does it present. The magister admits that his youth has prevented him from gathering very many symptoms; but, after having arrived at the end of his undertaking, he feels justified pride in being able to point out that he is leaving his successors a new subject for research; and that, in a matter apparently so completely threshed out, not only is there something more to be said, but also a great many points to be elucidated. He therefore gives here, without order or

connection, the rough elements which he has been able to gather, hoping that he may later have the leisure to co-ordinate them and reduce them to a complete system. If he were to be forestalled in this eminently national undertaking, he thinks it devolves upon him to indicate here, without incurring the reproach of vanity, the natural division of these symptoms. They are necessarily of two kinds: the *unicorns* and the *bicorns*. The unicorn Minotaur is the least harmful; the two culprits remain platonic lovers, or at least, their passion leaves no visible trace in posterity; while the bicorn Minotaur represents misfortune with all its consequences.

We have marked with an asterick the symptoms which we think belong to the second class.

Minotaurical Remarks

I

* When a woman, after having been separated from her husband for some time makes conspicuous advances in order to induce a loving mood in him, she acts according to the maxim of maritime law: *The flag covers the merchandise*.

II

A woman at a ball meets a friend, who exclaims:

“Your husband is so clever.”

“Do you think so? . . .”

III

Your wife finds that it is high time that your child, from which she never could endure to be separated a minute, should be sent to boarding-school.

IV

* In the divorce suit of Lord Abergavenny, his man testified that “the Viscountess had such a repulsion for everything which belonged to my lord, that I have often seen her burn pieces of paper which he had touched.”

V

If an indolent woman becomes active, if a woman who shunned study begins to learn a foreign tongue, in a word, all complete change of character, is a decisive symptom.

VI

A woman who is very happy in her heart affairs shuns society.

VII

A woman with a lover becomes very indulgent.

VIII

* A man gives his wife a hundred *écus* a month; and, all things considered, she spends at least five hundred francs without running into debt; the husband is robbed every night, the thief being armed and proceeding by escalade, but . . . without housebreaking.

IX

* The married pair were wont to share the same bed; madame was constantly ailing; now they sleep separately and she has no more headaches, in fact her health is better than it has ever been: alarming symptom!

X

A woman who gave no thought to her appearance, suddenly becomes engrossed in her toilet. The Minotaur is lurking in the vicinity!

XI

"Oh! my dear, there is no greater misery than to be misunderstood."

"Yes, my dear, but when you are understood! . . ."

"Oh! that hardly ever happens."

"I admit that it is very rare. Ah! it is a great happi-

ness, but then, there are not two people in the whole world who can understand you."

XII

* The day a woman begins to be careful of her husband's feelings . . . his fate is sealed.

XIII

I asked her:

"Where have you been, Jeanne?"

"I have been at your compeer's, getting what you left behind."

"Heigho! she is still mine," said I.

The following year I asked her the same question, in the same position.

"I went to fetch our crockery."

"Ha!" said I, "I am still in the combination!"

But, afterward, if I question her, she will say to me very differently:

"You want to know everything, like your peers, and still you do not possess three shirts to your back. I went to fetch *my* crockery from my compeer, and I supped with him."

"It is a settled question," said I.

XIV

Mistrust a woman who speaks of her virtue.

XV

The Duchesse de Chaulnes, whose state of health inspired the greatest anxiety, was told that:

"Monsieur le Duc de Chaulnes would like to see you again."

"Is he here?"

"Yes."

"Then let him wait. . . . He can come in with the last sacraments."

This anecdote has been related by Chamfort, but it had to be given here as a type.

XVI

* There are women who try to persuade their husbands that they (the husbands) have duties to perform toward certain people.

"I tell you that you should call on Monsieur So-and-so; we must invite Monsieur So-and-so to dine with us. . . ."

XVII

"Now, son, throw your shoulders back; try and develop good manners! Look at Monsieur So-and-so! . . . Watch his walk! . . . study his clothes! . . ."

XVIII

When a woman speaks a man's name but twice a day, there may be some doubt about the nature of her feeling for him; but three times? . . . Oh! oh!

XIX

When a woman accompanies a man who is neither a lawyer nor a minister of State to the door of her apartments, she is acting very imprudently.

XX

It is a sad day for a husband when he fails to make out the reason for one of his wife's actions.

XXI

* The woman who allows herself to be caught in the act deserves her fate.

What should be the attitude of a husband when he has discovered a last symptom which does not for a moment permit him to doubt that his wife has been unfaithful to him? This question is readily solved. There are only two things to do: either be resigned or seek revenge; but there is only one term between these two extremes. If one chooses revenge, it must be complete. The husband who does not leave his wife forever is a fool. If a man and wife deem that they can still have for one another the friendship which

unites two men, there is something odious in making the wife feel the advantage one might take of her position.

Here are a few anecdotes, some of which are unpublished, that, in my opinion, show rather aptly the different shades of conduct that a husband should follow in such a case.

Monsieur de Roquemont used to remain with his wife one night in every month, and would leave her, saying as he went out:

“I have done my duty, let come what may!”

There is both depravity and clever conjugal policy in his attitude.

A diplomat, upon seeing his wife's lover, would emerge from his study, enter his wife's apartments and say:

“Whatever you do, do not quarrel! . . .”

This is truly cordial.

Someone asked Monsieur de Boufflers what he would do if, after he had been away for some time, he returned and found his wife pregnant?

“I would have my slippers and my dressing-gown taken to her apartments.”

There is greatness of soul in this reply.

“Madame, if this man maltreats you when you are alone with him, it is your own fault; but I will not allow him to insult you in my presence, for it is insulting me.”

This is a noble feeling.

The most sublime thing of all is the mortar cap hung on the foot of the bed by a judge who had surprised the guilty pair asleep in each other's arms.

There are some truly fine revenges. Mirabeau, in one of the books he wrote to earn his living, has admirably depicted the somber resignation of the Italian woman condemned by her husband to perish with him in the Maremmas.

Final Axioms

XCIH

By surprising your wife in her lover's arms and killing both of them, you do not revenge yourself, for it is the best thing that can happen to them.

XCIV

A husband will never be so well avenged as by his wife's lover.

MEDITATION XXVIII

CONCERNING COMPENSATIONS

THE conjugal catastrophe which a certain number of husbands are unable to avoid almost always creates a peripetia. Then, suddenly, everything in your surroundings calms down. Your resignation, if you have the strength to be resigned, has the effect of making your wife and her lover experience remorse, for their bliss makes them realize the extent of the injury they have done you. You are present, without being aware of the fact, in all their pleasures. The principle of kindness and good which lies in every human heart is not as easily choked as one might think; therefore, the two souls that are tormenting you are the ones which really feel the most kindly toward you.

During those suave conversations, full of familiarity, which serve as connecting links to love's delights, and which are, in a way, mental caresses, your wife often says to your substitute:

"Well, Auguste, I assure you that I would like my husband to be happy, for he is really kind at heart; if he were not my husband, only my brother, there are a lot of things that I would do for him! He loves me, and—his friendship disturbs me."

"Yes, he is a good man! . . ."

Then you become the object of this bachelor's respect; he would like to compensate you in every way for the wrong he is doing you; but he is checked by the scornful pride which you exhibit in all your actions and all your speeches.

In fact, the first time that the Minotaur shows itself, a man resembles an actor who is ill at ease because he finds himself on a stage to which he is unaccustomed. It is very hard to be a fool in a dignified manner; however, noble

characters are not so rare that one cannot find among them a model husband.

Then, you are unconsciously won over by the attentions your wife heaps upon you. Madame adopts a friendly tone with you that she will never relinquish. The increased comfort of your home is one of the first compensations which will enable you to look less bitterly upon the Minotaur. But, as it is man's nature to become accustomed to the greatest hardships, in spite of the noble sentiments which nothing could change, you are brought, by a fascination which unceasingly encompasses you, to accept the little comforts of your position.

Let us suppose that the conjugal catastrophe has fallen upon a man given to the pleasures of the table. He naturally seeks consolation in his favorite pastime. His feelings, having taken refuge in another part of his being, develop other habits. You become accustomed to other delights.

One fine day, after leaving the Department, and remaining for some time in contemplation before the rich and savory bookstore owned by Chevet, torn between the desire of expending a hundred francs and the delights of a *pâté de foies gras* from Strasbourg, you are amazed to find, on reaching your home, that the *pâté* is insolently enthroned on your sideboard. Is it a gastronomical mirage? In this uncertainty you advance upon it (a *pâté* is a living creature) with a firm step, you almost whinny when the smell of the truffles which pierces its golden walls reaches your nostrils; you bend over it again and again; all the follicles of your palate seem to have a soul; you anticipate the pleasures of a real feast, and while filled with these ecstatic thoughts, remorse suddenly overwhelms you as you come into your wife's presence.

"In truth, my dear, we are not rich enough to allow ourselves such a *pâté*. . . ."

"But it has not cost us a sou!"

"Oh! oh!"

"Yes, Monsieur Achille's brother sent it to him! . . ."

You notice Monsieur Achille sitting in a corner. The bachelor greets you and seems delighted to have you accept the

pâté. You throw a glance at your wife, who suddenly blushes; you stroke your beard several times, and as you do not proffer your thanks, the two lovers guess that you have accepted the compensation.

The Cabinet has just fallen. A husband who is a State Councilor fears that he will be dismissed, when, only the day before, he had hopes of a better position; all the ministers are against him and he becomes constitutional. Anticipating his downfall, he has gone to Auteuil, to seek the consolations of an old friend, who entertained him with Horace and Tibullus. On reaching his home, he notices that the table is laid as if the most influential men of the community were to be entertained.

"In truth, Madame la Comtesse," he ungraciously exclaims, upon entering his wife's room, where she is giving the finishing touches to her toilet, "I see no evidence of your usual tact! . . . You choose a good time to give a dinner. . . . Twenty people are going to learn. . . ."

"That you are general-manager!" she exclaims, showing him the royal appointment.

He is astounded. He takes the letter, turns it over and over, opens it and sits down to read it.

"I knew that, no matter under what ministry, they would do me justice."

"Yes, dear, but Monsieur de Villeplaine vouched for you to his Eminence, Cardinal. . . . He is the Cardinal's——"

"Monsieur de Villeplaine?"

This is such a rich compensation that the husband adds with a general-manager's smile:

"Well, my dear, that was certainly you!"

"Oh! do not feel indebted to me! Adolphe did it instinctively and because he is so fond of you!"

Some evening, a poor husband kept in the house by a drenching rain, or perhaps tired of spending his nights at the club, at the café, in society, in gambling houses, and unspeakably bored, is compelled after dinner to follow his wife into the conjugal chamber. He sinks into an arm-chair and awaits his coffee with the proud air of a sultan; he seems to be thinking: "Well, after all, she's my wife!"

The siren herself prepares the favorite beverage, and exerts special care in the brewing; she sweetens the cup, tastes it and hands it to her lord; and with a smile on her lips she, submissive slave, tries a light jest to win the favor of her master. Until then he had thought his wife dull; but, on hearing the clever sally with which you tease him, madame, he raises his head with that peculiar motion of a dog which scents a hare.

"Where in the devil's name did she get that? . . . But it may have been merely accidental," he says to himself.

From his lofty altitude, he retorts with a spicy remark. Madame replies, interesting and amusing, and that husband, who is a rather superior man, is amazed at his wife's cleverness and intellect, which is most varied; the right word comes to her lips with marvelous facility and her tact and delicacy enable her to make remarks of a novel and graceful turn. She is no longer the same woman. She notices the effect she has produced on her husband; and, as much to revenge his neglect of her as to make him admire the lover who has endowed her, so to speak, with the graces of his mind, she warms to the game and dazzles him. The husband who, better than anyone else, can appreciate a compensation which must necessarily have some influence on his career, begins to think that a woman's passion is a sort of necessary culture.

But how shall we express the compensation which is the most flattering to a husband?

Between the time when the last symptoms appear, and the period of conjugal quiescence, which we shall soon discuss, there is a period of about ten years. Now, during this lapse of time and before the pair has signed the treaty which, through a sincere reconciliation between the feminine population and its legitimate master, consecrates their little matrimonial "restauration," before closing, according to the expression of Louis XVIII., the "abyss of revolutions," it is rare that a "nice" woman has had only one lover. Anarchy possesses some inevitable features. The fiery domination of the Tribunes is replaced by that of the sword or the pen, for one rarely meets lovers who are constant

ten years. Then, our calculations having proven that a woman has not, by accomplishing the happiness of three people, strictly filled her physiological or diabolical propensities, it is very probable that her foot has trodden various devious paths. Sometimes, during a too lengthy suspension of love, it happens that a woman takes it into her head to captivate her husband, either from a spirit of mischief or the attraction of novelty.

Imagine charming Madame de T——, the heroine of our Meditation on “Strategy,” saying in an arch way:

“Why, I have never known you to be so nice.”

From one piece of flattery to another she attempts to arouse your curiosity, jests, encourages the slightest desire you may experience for her, takes possession of it, and makes you proud of yourself. Then for a husband comes the night of compensation. Like those cosmopolitan travelers, she is able to relate the wonders of the lands she has seen. She scatters foreign expressions gathered from all countries, through her tale. The passionate similes of the Orient, the strange movement of Spanish phrases, all mingle and clash. She unrolls the treasures of her album with all the mystery of coquetry, she is delightful, you never knew her before! . . . With that strange art which women have for appropriating everything which is taught them, she has mingled the various shades of her learning so that she has a manner peculiar to herself. The god of marriage had given you but a single, awkward woman, whereas generous celibacy gives you ten. The delighted husband then sees his nuptial couch invaded by the playful band of those enticing courtesans of whom we spoke in our Meditation on the “First Symptoms.” The goddesses flock around the dainty bed, laughing and gamboling. The *Phénicienne* hurls her wreaths at you and sways lightly, the *Chalcidisseuse* surprises you by her white and delicate feet, the *Unelmane* arrives and discloses to you, while speaking the dialect of fair Ionia, treasures of unknown bliss in the study of a single sensation.

Sorrowful at having scorned such charms and tired of having found so often that the priestesses of Venus are as

tricky as "nice women," a husband sometimes hastens, through his gallantry, the reconciliation to which good people always tend. That aftermath of pleasure is sometimes attended with greater enjoyment than love's first harvest. The Minotaur robbed you of gold, but repays you in diamonds. Indeed, it might be well to now formulate a fact of the highest importance. A man can *have* a woman without really *possessing* her. Like most husbands, you had perhaps not received from your wife what she was able to give, and the intervention of the bachelor was required to render your union perfect. What shall we call this miracle, the only one which is performed on a patient during his absence? Alas! brothers, we did not make Nature!

But by how many other rich compensations the generous and noble soul of a young celibate sometimes purchases forgiveness! I remember having witnessed one of the most magnificent rewards that a lover can offer the husband he has deceived.

One warm evening in the summer of 1817, there entered Tortoni's one of the several hundred young men whom we call our "friends" with such touching confidence; he was in all the glory of his modesty. A delightful woman, dressed in perfect taste, and who had consented to enter the fashionable place, emerged from a carriage which drew up at the curb and gave her arm to the young bachelor, while her husband followed with two beautiful little children. As they were crossing the entrance-hall, the husband jostled some dandy who resented his jostling. A quarrel ensued, which became serious in an instant on account of the bitter remarks which were exchanged. Just as the dandy was going to permit himself a gesture unworthy of a man who has any self-respect, the bachelor interposed, grasped the dude's arm and left him non-plussed and speechless. He was superb. He accomplished the act which the aggressor had planned by saying:

"Monsieur? . . ."

That *monsieur* is one of the finest speeches that I have ever heard. It was just as if the young man had said: "That *pater familias* belongs to me; as long as I have robbed him

of his honor it is befitting that I should defend that honor. I know my duty; I am his substitute and I will fight his duel for him." The young wife was sublime. Pale, distraught, she had seized her husband's arm; and, without uttering a word, she dragged him and the children to the carriage. She was one of those women of the world who always know how to make the violence of their feelings agree with what is proper.

"Oh! Monsieur Adolphe," she cried when she saw her friend step into the carriage unperturbed.

"It is nothing, madame; he is one of my friends and we have made up."

The next morning, however, the brave bachelor received a sword thrust that endangered his life, and kept him confined to his bed for six months. He received the most touching care from the married couple. How many compensations! . . . A few years after this episode, one of the husband's old uncles, whose opinions did not agree with those of the youthful friend of the family, and who nursed a feeling of resentment toward him on account of some political discussion, undertook to make him *persona non grata* with the pair. The old man even went as far as to tell his nephew that he would have to choose between his inheritance and the young bachelor. Then the worthy business man, he was a broker, said to his uncle:

"Uncle, you will not be able to induce me to forget my gratitude! . . . Why, if I should tell him to do so, that young man would die for you! He saved my credit, he would go through fire for me, he rids me of my wife, he gets me customers, he got me nearly all the transactions in the Villèle loan. . . . I owe my life to him . . . he is the father of my children. . . . A man cannot forget such things! . . ."

All these compensations can be considered complete; but, unfortunately, there are all kinds of compensations. There are negative and fallacious ones, and some which are both fallacious and negative at the same time.

I know an old husband, in the toils of the gambling passion; almost every night his wife's lover comes and gambles

with him. The bachelor most liberally provides him with the pleasure which is derived from the uncertainty of games of chance, and regularly loses about a hundred francs a month; but madame gives the money back to him. . . . The compensation is fallacious.

You are a peer of France and all your children are daughters. Your wife brings a son into the world! . . . The compensation is negative.

The child which saves your name from oblivion looks like its mother. . . . Madame la Duchesse induces you to believe that it is yours. The negative compensation becomes fallacious.

Here is one of the most delightful compensations known.

One morning, the Prince de Ligne met his wife's lover, and laughing uproariously, rushed up to him and exclaimed:

"My dear fellow, I deceived you last night with my wife!"

If so many husbands arrive gently at conjugal peace, and so gracefully wear the imaginary insignia of matrimonial power, it is because their philosophy is no doubt upheld by the *comfort* of certain compensations which the idle cannot divine. A few years roll by and the married pair reach the last stage of the artificial existence to which they condemned themselves by marrying.

MEDITATION XXIX

CONCERNING CONJUGAL PEACE

My spirit has so lovingly accompanied marriage in all its fantastic phases, that I feel as if I had grown old with the couple who were so young at the beginning of this book.

After having experienced in mind the strenuousness of the first human passions, after having sketched, no matter how imperfectly, the principal events of matrimonial life; after having struggled against so many women who were nothing to me; after having become exhausted battling

against so many characters called into existence by myself; after having witnessed so many combats, I feel an intellectual lassitude which seems to spread a dark veil over the things of this world. I imagine that I have catarrh, that I wear green spectacles, that my hands shake and that I am going to spend the second half of my existence and of my book excusing the follies committed in the first half. I see myself surrounded by grown-up children that are not mine own, and I sit by the side of a woman whom I have never married. I think I can even feel an accumulation of wrinkles on my brow. I am sitting by a glowing hearth, in an old-fashioned room. . . . I put my hand to my heart with a feeling of fear, asking the while: "Can it be that it has shriveled up? . . ."

Like an old attorney, no sentiment impresses me any more, and I do not admit a fact until it has been sworn to, as Lord Byron says in one of his poems, by two reliable witnesses. No face can deceive me. I am gloomy and depressed. I know life and it holds no more illusions for me. My most holy friendships have been betrayed. I exchange with my wife a glance of immense understanding, and our slightest words are dagger-thrusts which pierce our lives through and through. I feel a horrible calmness. So this is the peace of old age! The old man possesses a foretaste of the grave which will so soon take possession of him. He is able to get used to the cold. The philosophers tell us that men die by inches; that they even get the better of Death: for, is that which Death snatches from their palsied hands, always life? . . .

Oh! to die young and spirited! . . . What an enviable fate! Is it not, as one delightful poet expresses it: "To take with you all your illusions, to bury yourself like an Oriental prince with your precious stones and treasures, with all that life contains?" How we should thank the kind and gentle spirit which pervades all the things of this world! Indeed, the solicitude with which Nature robs us of our garments one by one, uncovers our souls by weakening our eyesight, hearing and touch, by delaying our circulation and solidifying our humors in order to render us as insensible

to the approach of Death as we were to that of Life, the maternal care she takes of our frail shell is also displayed for sentiments and the dual existence that conjugal love creates. Nature first sends us *Confidence*, which opens her hands and her heart and says: "Behold! I am forever yours. . . ." Lukewarm *Affection* follows, walking with halting steps, turning her blonde head to yawn, like a young widow compelled to listen to a minister signing her school certificate. Now comes *Indifference*: she sinks onto a divan, without taking the trouble to smooth down the skirts which desire used to raise so chastely and swiftly; she throws on the nuptial couch a glance which contains neither modesty nor lewdness; and if she has any desire at all, it is for green fruits which will rouse her jaded palate. Finally, the *Philosophical Experience* of life arrives on the scene, with gloomy brow and scornful mien, pointing to the results, not to the causes; to calm victory, not to the seething battle. She figures out arrears with the farmers and the dowry to be given some child. She materializes everything. By a motion of her wand, life becomes compact and without vim; everything used to be fluid, but now everything has been mineralized. Pleasure no longer exists for us; it has been weighed and found wanting; it was only a sensation, a passing crisis; now, what the soul wants is a permanent state; happiness is permanent, residing in absolute tranquillity, in the regularity of one's meals, sleep, and organic functions.

"Why, this is horrible!" I cried; "I am young and full of life! . . . Perish all the books in the world rather than one of my illusions!"

I left my laboratory and escaped into the streets of Paris. When I again beheld the exquisite women, I knew that I was not old. The first young, pretty and well-dressed woman I saw made the influence under which I was consciously laboring, vanish by the brightness of her glance. I had hardly started to walk in the direction of the Tuileries before I noticed the prototype of the matrimonial situation which this book has reached. I wanted to characterize or personify marriage, as I conceive of it, when it would have

been impossible for the Holy Trinity to create such a perfect symbol.

Imagine a woman about fifty years old, clad in a woolen jacket of a reddish brown color, holding in her left hand a green strap attached to the collar of a pretty little English terrier, and leading an old man dressed in silk stockings and breeches. On his head he wore a hat whose edges curled capriciously and under both sides of which were tufts of white hair that stuck out like pigeon wings. A little queue, about as thick as a penholder, dangled down on his fat, yellow neck, which was discolored by the turned-down collar of his shabby coat. The couple were walking with all the pomp of two ambassadors; and the husband, who must have been at least seventy years old, would stop every time that the dog had to attend to some duty. I hastened my steps in order to pass this living image of my Meditation and was astounded to recognize the Marquis de T——, the friend of the Comte de Nocé, who owed me the end of the interrupted story I reported in the "Theory of the Bed." (See Meditation XVII.)

"I have the honor," said he, "to present to you Madame the Marquise de T——."

I made a deep bow to a lady with a pale, wrinkled face; she wore a number of flat, round curls on her forehead, which, far from producing any illusion, only added one more blemish to the wrinkles which seamed her face. The lady was slightly rouged and resembled an old provincial actress.

"I do not see, sir, what you can have to say about a marriage like ours," said the old man.

"The Roman laws forbid it," I laughingly replied.

The Marquise threw me a glance full of anxiety and disapproval, and which seemed to say: "Have I reached this age to be nothing but a concubine? . . ."

We went to sit on a bench in the gloomy arbor planted at the angle of the high terrace which dominates the Place Louis XV., near the Garde-Meuble. The autumn leaves were already falling, but the sun shed a mild warmth over all.

"Well, is your book finished?" asked the old gentleman,

with the unctuous accent which distinguished the men of the old aristocracy.

He supplemented his words with a sardonic expression, which was intended as a commentary.

"About finished, monsieur," I replied. "I have reached the philosophical situation to which you have attained, but I must acknowledge that I——"

"You were looking for ideas?" he added, completing the sentence I did not know how to end.

"Well," he continued, "you can boldly say that, when a man reaches the winter of his lifetime he . . . (you must understand that I mean a thoughtful man) ends by denying the existence of that love which we garb in so many illusions! . . ."

"What! would you deny love the day after your marriage?"

"In the first place, the day after would be a good reason; but my marriage is a speculation," he continued, speaking into my ear. "I have purchased the care and attention which I need, and I am quite certain of obtaining all the regard that is due my age; for I have bequeathed my whole fortune to a nephew, and as my wife has only the use of the money during my lifetime, you understand that——"

I threw the old man such a comprehending look that he pressed my hand and said:

"You seem to be kind-hearted, but one must not go by appearances. . . . Well, you may believe that I have kept a pleasant surprise for her in my will," he added cheerfully.

"Hurry, Joseph," cried the Marquise, going forward to meet a servant who was carrying a silk-lined, wadded coat, "monsieur may have already caught cold."

The old Marquis put the coat on, buttoned it, and taking me by the arm, led me to a spot on the terrace which was flooded with sunshine.

"In your book," said he, "you have spoken of love like a young man would. Well, if you wish to acquit yourself of the duties which the word ec—elec—impose on you. . . ."

"Eclectic," I said with a smile, for he had never been able to get used to this philosophical name.

"I know the word very well," he retorted. "So if you wish to obey your vow of *electism*, you will have to express some virile ideas on the subject of love which I shall communicate to you, and I will not take the glory for them, if glory there be, for I wish to bequeath some of my possessions to you, but this will be all you will get."

"There is no pecuniary fortune worth an intellectual fortune, when the ideas are good! Therefore, I shall hearken gratefully to what you have to say."

"Love does not exist," resumed the old gentleman, looking me in the eye. "It is not even a sentiment—it is an unfortunate necessity, a cross between the needs of the body and those of the soul. But, by espousing for an instant your youthful ideas, let us try to argue this social disease. I think that you cannot look upon love otherwise than as a necessity or a sentiment."

I made a sign of acquiescence.

"Considered as a necessity," said the old man, "love is the last one among all the others to make itself felt, and it is also the first to depart. We are amorous at twenty (do not let us question the differences), and cease to be so at fifty. During these thirty years, how many times would the feeling manifest itself were it not provoked by the heating customs of city life, and the habit of living in the presence, not of one woman, but of women generally? What do we owe the preservation of the race? Perhaps as many children as there are breasts to feed them, because if one should die, the other will survive. If these two children were always faithfully begotten, what would become of nations? Thirty million individuals are too large a population for France, as long as the soil suffices only to keep ten million people out of misery and pauperism. Remember that China is compelled to have her children drowned, according to the reports of travelers. Now, marriage means only two children. Superfluous pleasures are therefore not only lewd, but a great loss to a man, as I will show you later. Now compare this poverty of action and duration with the daily and perpetual exactions of the other conditions of life! Nature questions us at all times concerning our real needs;

and, quite on the contrary, she absolutely refuses to give her sanction to the excesses which our imaginations sometimes solicit of love. So it is the last of our needs, and the only one which, when ignored, does not produce any ill effects in the economy of the body. Love is a social luxury, like diamonds and real lace. Now, if we examine it as a sentiment, we may find distinctions, pleasure and passion. Analyze pleasure. Human affections are based on two principles: attraction and aversion. Attraction is that general feeling for the things that flatter our instinct of preservation; aversion is the exercise of the same instinct when it warns us that a thing is prejudicial to it. Everything which powerfully agitates our organism gives us an intimate and keen feeling of our existence: that is pleasure. It is constituted of the desire, the difficulty and the enjoyment of having any given object. Pleasure is a single element, and our passions are only its more or less keen modifications; therefore, the habit of one pleasure nearly always excludes the others. Now, love is the least keen and least durable of our pleasures. In what consists the pleasure of love? Is it in the possession of a fair body? With money you can, in a night, acquire some really admirable odalisks; but, in a month, you may have forever blasted this desire within yourself. Might it be something else? Do you love a woman because she happens to be well-dressed, elegant, rich, because she owns her carriage and has social position? Do not call that *love*, for it is vanity, avarice and egotism. Do you love her because she is witty? You then perhaps obey a literary sentiment."

"But," said I, "love reveals its delights only to those who mingle their thoughts, fortunes, feelings, souls and lives."

"Oh! oh! . . . oh!" cried the old man in a mocking voice, "find me seven men in every nation who have sacrificed, not their lives, for that would not be much: the tax on human life, under Napoleon, did not exceed twenty thousand francs; and there are at the present time in France two hundred and fifty thousand braves who are giving their lives for a two-inch red ribbon; but seven men who have

sacrificed to a woman ten millions on which they have slept alone for one night. . . . Dubreuil and Phméja are even rarer than the love of Mademoiselle Dupuis and Bolingbroke. So those sentiments proceed from an unknown cause. But you have made me consider love as a passion. Well, it is the smallest and the most contemptible of all. It promises everything and keeps nothing. As a need, it comes, like love, among the last, and perishes the soonest. Ah! talk to me of revenge, hatred, avarice, the gambling passion, ambition, fanaticism! Those passions have something virile about them; those sentiments are unperishable; every day they make the sacrifices which love makes only by fits and starts. But," he continued, "now abjure love. No more worry or anxiety; no more little passions that waste human strength. A man can live peaceful and happy; socially speaking, his power is infinitely greater and more intense. Divorce from that something which is called love, is the initial reason of the power of all the men who sway the masses, and yet it is nothing. Ah! if you only knew what magical strength comes to a man, with what intellectual treasures he is endowed and what longevity he finds in himself when, divorcing himself from all human passions, he employs his entire energy for the benefit of his soul! If you could enjoy for two minutes the riches that God dispenses to the men who are wise enough to look upon love only as a passing need, which they gratify a short time during youth; to the men who, scorning the heavy and deadening beefsteaks of Normandy, nourish themselves with the roots He has so liberally scattered, and lay themselves on beds of dry leaves like the recluses of Thebaïd! . . . Ah! you would discard in three seconds the remains of those fifteen sheep which cover you; you would throw your walking-stick away and you would go live in heaven! You would discover the love that you are seeking in the mire of this earth; you would hear concerts very different from those of Monsieur Rossini, voices purer than that of la Malibran. . . . But I speak only from hearsay and like a blind man: if I had not gone to Germany in 1791, I would know nothing of all this. . . . Yes, man has a vocation for the

infinite. He bears within himself an instinct which impels him toward the Maker. God is everything, gives everything, makes us forget everything, and thought is the thread He has given us to communicate with Him! . . .”

He paused abruptly with his eyes directed upward.

“The poor old man has lost his mind,” I thought.

“Monsieur,” I said, “it would be pushing devotion to philosophical eclecticism very far, were I to consign your opinions in my work; for it would mean destroying it. Everything it contains is based upon platonic or sensual love. May the Lord keep me from ending my book with such social blasphemies! I shall try instead to go back, by some pantagruelic subtlety, to my flock of bachelors and nice women, and shall endeavor to find some social utility for their follies and passions. Oh! oh! if conjugal peace leads us to such disillusioning and somber arguments, I know lots of husbands who would prefer war!”

“Ah! young man,” cried the Marquis, “I shall be free from the reproach of not having shown the right road to a lost traveler!”

“Good-by, old rack of bones,” I said to myself; “good-by, strolling marriage; good-by, extinguished fireworks! Good-by, old machine! Although I have given you at times the features of people who were dear to me, old family portraits, go back to the picture dealer, go and join Madame de T—— and all the others; you may become funeral advertisements, for all I care! . . .”

MEDITATION XXX

CONCLUSION

A RECLUSE, who believed he possessed second sight, having told the people of Israel to follow him up a mountain so as to witness the revelation of several mysteries, was escorted by a crowd large enough to flatter his pride, although he was a prophet.

But, as the mountain lay at a certain distance, it hap-

pened that, at the first stop, an artisan recollected that he had to deliver a pair of slippers to a duke; a woman remembered that her children's supper was on the stove; a publican bethought himself that he had some securities to negotiate, and they all went home.

A little farther on, some lovers lingered behind under the olive-trees and forgot the words of the prophet; for they thought that the Promised Land was where they had stopped, and that the Divine Word was their own language.

Fat men with stomachs like Sancho, and who for some time had been mopping their brows with their 'kerchiefs, began to get thirsty and remained behind at a clear spring.

Several old soldiers complained of their corns and spoke of Austerlitz, with regard to tight boots.

At the second halt some fashionable people whispered to one another:

"This prophet is a madman!"

"Did you believe him?"

"I only came out of curiosity."

"And I, because he has a following." (This from a society man.)

"He is a charlatan."

The prophet kept on his way. But, when he reached an immense plateau whence he discovered the immense horizon, he turned and perceived one poor Israelite to whom he might have remarked, like the Prince de Ligne did to the lone little drummer-boy that he found waiting for him at the spot where he expected to find a whole detachment of soldiery:

"Well, messieurs the audience, it seems that you are only one?"

Godly man, who have followed me until now, I hope that a little recapitulation will not frighten you, and I have traveled with the conviction that you, like myself, were thinking: "Where in the name of the devil are we going?"

Well, now is the time, respected reader, to ask you your opinion regarding the renewal of the tobacco monopoly, and what you think of the exorbitant taxes on wines, the

carrying of fire-arms, games, the lottery, playing-cards, brandy, soaps, woolens, silks, etc.

"I think that as all these taxes enter for a third into the yield of the budget, we would be extremely put out were——"

So, model husband, if nobody got drunk, nor played cards, nor smoked, nor hunted, if, in a word, there was no vice in France, nor passions, nor disease, the State would be on the verge of bankruptcy; for it seems that our income is mortgaged on public corruption, just as our commerce maintains itself through luxury. If one wishes to look into it a little more closely, all taxes are based on a moral malady. In fact, does not the large income of the domains proceed from the insurance contracts that every man hastens to take out against the mutations of his good faith, in the same way that the fortunes of lawyers have their being in the suits brought against that good faith? And, to continue this philosophical survey, I can see the gendarmes without horses and skin breeches, if every citizen kept the peace and if there were no fools and ne'er-do-wells. Try to impose virtue! . . . Well, I think that there is more than one relation between my "nice" women and the budget; and I will undertake to prove it to you, if you will let me end my book as I started it, by a little statistical essay. Will you grant me that a lover uses more shirts than a husband or an idle celibate? It seems an unquestionable fact to me. The difference between a husband and a lover can be readily told by the aspect of their clothes. The one is without artifice, his beard is often several days old, while the other is always dressed to kill. Sterne said very wittily that a laundry-book was the most historical document that he possessed of *Tristram Shandy*; and that, by the number of the shirts, one could guess which parts of his book had been the hardest to write. Well, with lovers, the laundry-book is the most faithful and impartial historian that their love can have. Indeed, a passion requires a tremendous quantity of tibbets, cravats, and dresses necessitated by coquetry; for a great importance is attached to immaculate white stockings, a dazzling collar, a finely-

plaited shirt, an artistic tie and stock. This explains my passage regarding a "nice" woman: "She spends her life starching her dresses." I addressed myself to a member of the sex in order to learn the exact amount of the contribution which love imposes, and I remember that after having stated that, for a woman, a hundred francs a year would do, she added with a sort of *bonhomie*: "But it depends upon a man's character, for some men are more *destructive* than others." Nevertheless, after a very deep discussion, where I represented the bachelors, and the lady, the fair sex, it was decided that, all in all, two lovers of the social standing of those we have had in mind throughout this book, must both spend for this article one hundred and fifty francs more than in times of peace. By a like and lengthily discussed treaty, we also decided upon a collective difference of four hundred francs between times of peace and of war relative to all the parts composing dress. This sum was even thought most insufficient by all the feminine and masculine authorities we consulted on the subject. The enlightenment we received from some persons gave us the idea to give a dinner to some of these wise people, so that we might be guided by them in our important investigations. The dinner took place. With glass in hand, and after some brilliant improvisations, legislative sanction was given the following chapters of love's budget. The allowance of fifty *écus* seemed reasonable for the little cakes that are consumed while at the promenade, for the bunches of violets and theater-boxes. A sum of two hundred francs was deemed necessary for the extraordinary bills at the various restaurants. As long as expenditure was recognized, it was necessary to cover it by receipts. It was during this discussions that a young "*cheval-léger*" (for the king had not yet suppressed his *maison rouge* at the time when this transaction was contemplated), rendered almost *ebriolus* by champagne, was called to order for having dared compare lovers with distillating apparatuses. But a chapter which gave rise to the most violent discussions, and which remained adjourned for several weeks, and made a report necessary, was the chapter concerning presents. In the last

séance the dainty Madame de D—— was the first to give her opinion; and in a graceful speech which revealed the nobility of her sentiments, she tried to demonstrate that most of the time the gifts of love had no intrinsic value. The author replied that all lovers had their likeness painted. One lady demurred and said that portraits were only a sort of capital, for lovers were always careful to get them back so as to give them to their new sweethearts.

But suddenly a gentleman from Provence rose to utter a “philippic” against the ladies. He spoke of the unbelievable passion of most women for furs, fabrics, silks, jewels and furniture; but a lady interrupted him by asking him if Madame d’O——y, her intimate friend, had not paid his debts twice.

“You are mistaken, madame,” retorted the gentleman, “it was her husband.”

“The orator is called to order and sentenced to treat the assembly for having used the word *husband*,” cried the president.

The native of Provence was completely refuted by a lady who tried to prove that women are much more devoted when in love, than men; that lovers are very expensive, and that a “nice” woman would consider herself very lucky if she could get out of it with two thousand francs a year. The discussion was about to degenerate into personalities, when the ballot was demanded. The commission’s conclusions were adopted. These conclusions said in substance that the sum of annual presents between lovers was to be placed at five hundred francs, but the following things were to be counted in this amount: 1st, money for outings; 2d, expenditures for drugs to relieve colds caught while walking in the damp parks, or while leaving the theater, and which amounted to real presents; 3d, postage and chancellery fees; 4th, trips and all the various expenses which cannot be accounted for, without considering the extravagances which spendthrifts might commit; inasmuch as, according to the investigations of the commission, it was shown that most extravagances benefited light women, and not the lawful wives. The result of these pecuniary love statistics were that, all in all, a love

affair cost about fifteen hundred francs, expended by both lovers, often unequally, but which expenditure would not have occurred at all had there been no attachment. There was a kind of unanimity in the gathering to verify that this sum was the minimum of love's cost. Now, my dear sir, as we have proven by our statistical calculations (see *Meditations*, I, II and III) that there exists in France a floating mass of at least fifteen hundred thousand illicit passions, it follows:

That the criminal conversations of one-third of the French population contribute about three thousand millions to the circulation of money, that social blood whose heart is the budget;

That the "nice" woman not only gives life to children of the peerage, but also supplies it with capital;

That our factories owe their prosperity only to this *systolic* movement;

That the "nice" woman is an essentially consuming and budgetary being;

That the slightest decrease in public lovemaking would bring about incalculable losses to the Treasury and the people who live on their incomes;

That a husband has at least one-third of his income mortgaged on the inconstancy of his wife, etc.

I know that you are already opening your mouth to talk of politics, decency, right and wrong. . . . But, my dear deceived one, is happiness not the end that all social bodies should seek? Is not this axiom the one which makes our poor kings do so much for their subjects? Well, the "nice" woman has no throne, neither has she an army; she has only a bed to offer; but, if our four hundred thousand women render a million celibates blissful through this device, are they not mysteriously, and without ostentation, attaining the goal that all governments desire and which is to give the masses the greatest possible sum of happiness?

"Yes, but worries, children, misfortune . . ."

Ah! permit me here to emphasize the consoling words by which one of our wittiest cartoonists ends one of his caricatures: "Man is far from being perfect." Therefore, our

institutions need only have as many advantages as they have drawbacks, to be considered excellent; for mankind, socially speaking, is not placed between right and wrong, but between wrong and *worse*. Now, if the work which we have actually accomplished aimed to decrease the worst of matrimonial institutions, by uncovering the errors and nonsense to which our customs and prejudices give rise, it would certainly be one of the greatest titles a man could present for laying claim to a place among the *benefactors of humanity*.

Has the author not endeavored, by warning all husbands, to endow women with more reserve and consequently to give more impetus to love, more money to the Treasury, more life to commerce and agriculture? Thanks to this last Meditation, he may flatter himself that he has obeyed the vow of eclecticism he formed at the beginning of the work, and he hopes to have gathered, like a prosecuting attorney, all the documents of the suit, but without giving his conclusions. Indeed, what do you care about finding an axiom here? Do you wish this book to be the development of Tronchet's last opinion, when he, during the latter part of his life, deemed that, in connection with marriage, the lawmakers had considered the offspring much more than the participants? Or, would you prefer to have this book serve as a proof to the peroration of the monk who, preaching before Ann of Austria and seeing that the Queen, as well as the ladies of her household, were wroth over his triumphant sermon relating to their frailties, said to them, as he stepped down from the pulpit: "But you are all chaste women, and it is we who are unfortunate enough to be the sons of good Samaritans." Be that as it may. You are at liberty to extract any conclusion you please; for I believe it is very hard not to have two contrary ideas on the subject that do not both contain some truth. But this book was neither written for, nor against, marriage; and the author owed you only the most exact description. If by examining a machine we are led to improve some of its parts; if by cleaning a rusted portion we impart added efficiency to the mechanism, let the workman be rewarded.

If the author has had the impertinence to utter harsh truths, if he has too frequently generalized isolated cases, and has too grossly neglected the commonplace remarks which from time immemorial have been used to laud women oh! let him be crucified, but do not charge him with hostile intentions concerning the institution of marriage itself; he is only angry with the men and women. He knows that, as long as marriage has not destroyed itself, it is indestructible; and, all things considered, if there are so many complaints about it, perhaps it is because men can only remember their ills and accuse their wives as they accuse Life, for marriage is a life within life. The people, however, who are accustomed to form their opinions by the newspapers, might speak ill of the book that carried the mania for eclecticism too far; therefore, if they must absolutely have something resembling a peroration, it might not be impossible to gratify their wish. And, as long as words spoken by Napoleon have ushered in the book, why should the latter not end as it has begun? It was in the very heart of the State Council that the first Consul uttered the following ominous words, which at the same time eulogize and criticise marriage and sum up the present work: "If a man never grew old, I would not have him marry!"

Post Scriptum

"And shall you never marry?" inquired the Duchess of the author, who had just submitted his manuscript to her. (She was one of those women whose sagacity has been commended by the author in the introduction.)

"Certainly, madame," he retorted. "To meet a woman fearless enough to become my wife will henceforth be my most cherished hope."

"Is this resignation or conceit?"

"That is my secret."

"Well, monsieur the doctor of conjugal arts and sciences, let me tell you a little Oriental tale which I read in one of those works that used to be presented to us every year as almanacs. At the beginning of the Empire, some ladies

started the vogue of a game called *Diadesté*, which consisted in accepting nothing from your partner without saying that word. A game would last for weeks and weeks, and the climax of cleverness was to catch your partner in the act of taking some trifle without pronouncing the fatal word.

“Not even a kiss?”

“Oh! I have won twenty games that way!” she laughingly exclaimed.

“It was at that time and in regard to the game, whose origin, I believe, is either Chinese or Arabic, that my apologue obtained the honor of being printed. But, if I tell it,” she said, interrupting herself to lift her right hand to her nostrils with a charming gesture of coquetry, “permit me to place it at the end of your work. . . .”

“It will be adding a treasure to it. . . . I am already so indebted to you that it will be impossible ever to repay you; so I shall accept.”

She smiled a mischievous smile and spoke in these terms:

“A philosopher had once composed a book describing all the tricks a woman can play; and, in order to protect himself from the wiles of our sex, he always carried the volume with him. One day, while traveling, he came across an Arab camp. At his approach, a young woman who was reclining under a palm-tree arose and invited him to rest awhile in the tent; she spoke with such grace that he could not help accepting her offer. The husband of the lady happened to be absent at the time. Hardly had the philosopher seated himself upon a soft rug before his gracious hostess brought him some fresh dates and a jug of milk; he noticed, in spite of himself, the perfection of the hands which served him. But, in order to keep his mind from dwelling on the charms of the young Arabian woman, whose wiles seemed full of peril to him, the scientist took out his book and began to read. The captivating woman, piqued by his neglect, said to him in the softest voice:

““Your book must be very interesting, since it absorbs you to the exclusion of everything else. Would it be indiscreet to ask you what science it contains?”

"The philosopher with lowered eyes replied:

"The subject of this book is not a subject for women."

"The philosopher's refusal greatly increased the young woman's curiosity. She put forth the prettiest little foot that ever left its imprint on the sands of the desert. The philosopher's mind wandered again, and his eyes soon traveled from those feet, which held such fertile promises, to the bosom, even more enchanting; then his eyes, which were filled with the most ardent admiration, soon exchanged glances with the ardent black orbs of the young Asiatic. She inquired again in such a soft voice what the subject of the book was that the philosopher, charmed, replied:

"I am the author of this work; but the subject is not mine; it contains all the tricks that women have invented."

"What! . . . absolutely all?" said the daughter of the desert.

"Yes, all! And it is by studying women all the time that I have reached the point where I no longer fear them."

"Ah!" said the young Arabian, and lowered her long lashes.

"Then, throwing the philosopher the most ardent of glances, she soon made him forget his book and all the tricks it contained. In a moment, the philosopher became the most passionate of men. Thinking that he had detected a shade of coquetry in the young woman's manner, the stranger made a declaration. How could he help it? The sky was blue, the sand shone in the distance like a golden blade, the desert wind wafted love and the Arab's wife seemed to reflect all the fires with which she was surrounded; her eyes became moist, and inclining her little head so that it seemed as if she had communicated a wave to the luminous atmosphere, she consented to listen to the philosopher's suit. He was beginning to be filled with the most flattering hopes, when the young woman, hearing the distant gallop of a horse which was drawing nearer and nearer so that it seemed that the steed must have wings, exclaimed:

"We are lost! My husband will find us. He is as jealous as a tiger and even more pitiless. . . . In the name of the

Prophet, and if you value your life, conceal yourself in this box!’

“The terrified author, finding no other way of escape, entered the box and cowered therein; and the woman locked it and removed the key. Then she went out to greet her husband; after some caresses which put him in good humor:

“‘I must tell you a very strange thing,’ said she.

“‘I am listening, my gazelle,’ said the Arab, sitting on a rug and crossing his legs, according to the Oriental custom.

“‘There came to-day a sort of philosopher,’ said the girl. ‘He declared that he had gathered in a book all the tricks that my sex has ever invented, and that false man spoke to me of love.’

“‘Well?’ cried the Arab.

“‘I listened to him,’ she replied calmly; ‘he was young, ardent and . . . you arrived just in time to prevent my fall. . . .’

“The Arab leaped like a lion and drew his ‘kandjar’ with a roar of rage. The philosopher who, from his hiding-place, could hear every word, was sending his book, women and all the men in Arabia to Beelzebub.

“‘Fatme!’ cried the husband, ‘if you want me to spare you, answer me! . . . Where is the traitor?’

“Frightened at the storm she had aroused, Fatme crouched at her master’s feet, and trembling at the sight of the dagger, threw a single timid glance at the box. She staggered to her feet in confusion and, taking the key from her belt, handed it to her husband; but, just as he was about to open the box the wily woman burst into a loud laugh. Faroun stoppped in amazement and glanced anxiously at his wife.

“‘At last I will have my lovely gold chain!’ she exclaimed with glee, ‘give it to me, for you have lost the *Diadesté*. I hope you will have a better memory the next time.’

“The astounded husband let the key fall to the floor, and kneeling before his wife offered her the wonderful gold chain, telling her that he would give her all the jewels of the cara-

vans which would pass within the year if she would promise to renounce playing such cruel tricks to win the *Diadesté*. Then, as he was an Arab, and did not like to lose a gold chain, even if the recipient happened to be his wife, he mounted his horse and sallied forth to unload his feelings in the desert, for he loved Fatme too much to show her any regrets. Then the young woman, releasing the philosopher, said to him gravely:

“ ‘ Monsieur le Docteur, do not forget this trick in your book.’ ”

“ Madame,” said I to the Duchess, “ I understand! If I ever marry, I am bound to succumb to some unknown trick; but in that event, you can rest assured that I shall offer the example of a model household to the admiration of my fellow-men.”

PARIS, 1824-1829.

PIERRE GRASSOU

[*Pierre Grassou* was first printed in a miscellany named *Babel* in the year 1840, was republished with *Pierrette* in the same year, and joined the “Maison de Balzac” in 1844.]

PIERRE GRASSOU

*To Lieutenant-Colonel Périollas (of the Artillery) as a proof
of the author's affection and esteem.*

De Balzac.

ON every occasion when you have gone seriously to study the Exhibition of works in sculpture and painting, such as it has been since the Revolution of 1830, have you not been seized by a feeling of discomfort, boredom, and melancholy at the sight of the long, over-filled galleries? Since 1830 the Salon has ceased to exist. Once more the Louvre has been taken by storm by the mob of artists, and they have kept possession. Formerly, when the Salon gave us a choice collection of works of art, it secured the greatest honors for the examples exhibited there. Among the two hundred selected pictures the public chose again; a crown was awarded to the masterpieces by unknown hands. Impassioned discussions arose as to the merits of a painting. The abuse heaped on Delacroix and on Ingres were not of less service to them than the praises and fanaticism of their adherents.

In our day neither the crowd nor the critic can be vehement over the objects in this bazaar. Being compelled to make the selection which was formerly undertaken by the examining jury, their attention is exhausted by the effort; and by the time it is finished the Exhibition closes.

Until 1817 the pictures accepted never extended beyond the two first columns of the long gallery containing the works of the old masters, and this year they fill the whole of this space, to the great surprise of the public. Historical painting, *genre*, easel pictures, landscape, flowers, animals, and water-color paintings,—each of these eight classes could never yield more than twenty pictures worthy of the eye of the public, who cannot give attention to a larger collection of pictures.

The more the number of artists increases, the more exacting should the jury of selection become. All was lost as soon as the Salon encroached further on the gallery. The Salon should have been kept within fixed and restricted limits, inflexibly defined, where each class might exhibit its best works. The experience of ten years has proved the excellence of the old rules. Instead of a tourney, you now have a riot; instead of a glorious exhibition, you have a medley bazaar; instead of a selection, you have everything at once. What is the result? A great artist is swamped. The *Turkish Café*, the *Children at the Well*, the *Torture by Hooks*, and the *Joseph* by Decamps would have done more for his glory if exhibited, all four, in the great room with the hundred other good pictures of the year, than his twenty canvases buried among three thousand paintings, and dispersed among six galleries.

With strange perversity, since the doors have been thrown open to all, there has been much talk of unappreciated genius. When, twelve years before, the *Courtesan*, by Ingres, and Sigalon's pictures, Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, Delacroix's *Massacre of Scio*, and Eugène Deveria's *Baptism of Henri IV.*—accepted, as they were, by yet more famous men, who were taxed with jealousy—revealed to the world, notwithstanding the carping of critics, the existence of youthful and ardent painters, not a complaint was ever heard. But now, when the veriest dauber of canvas can display his works, we hear of nothing but misunderstood talent. Where there is no longer any judgment, nothing is judged. Our artists, do what they may, will come back to the ordeal of selection which recommends their work to the admiration of the public for whom they toil. Without the choice exercised by the Academy, there will be no Salon; and without the Salon, art may perish.

Since the catalogue has grown to be a fat volume, many names are found there which remain obscure, notwithstanding the list of ten or twelve pictures that follows them. Among these names, the least known of all perhaps is that of an artist named Pierre Grassou, a native of Fougères, and called, for shortness, Fougères in the artist world—a name

which nowadays fills so much space on the page, and which has suggested the bitter reflections introducing this sketch of his life, and applicable to some other members of the artist tribe.

In 1832 Fougères was living in the Rue de Navarin, on the fourth floor of one of those tall, narrow houses that are like the obelisk of Luxor, which have a passage and a dark, narrow staircase with dangerous turnings, which are not wide enough for more than three windows on each floor, and have a courtyard, or, to be exact, a square well at the back. Above the three or four rooms inhabited by Fougères was his studio, looking out over Montmartre. The studio, painted brick red; the floor, carefully stained brown and polished; each chair provided with a square, bordered mat; the sofa, plain enough, but as clean as that in a tradeswoman's bedroom, everything betrayed the petty existence of a narrow mind and the carefulness of a poor man. There was a closet for keeping the studio properties in, a breakfast table, a sideboard, a desk, and the various objects necessary for painting, all clean and in order. The stove, too, had the benefit of this Dutch neatness, which was all the more conspicuous because the pure and steady northern sky flooded the back room with clear, cold light. Fougères, a mere painter of *genre*, had no need for the huge machinery which ruins historical painters; he had never discerned in himself faculties competent to venture on the higher walks of art, and was still content with small easels.

In the beginning of the month of December of that year, the season when Paris Philistines are periodically attacked by the burlesque idea of perpetuating their faces—in themselves a sufficient burden—Pierre Grassou, having risen early, was setting his palette, lighting his stove, eating a roll soaked in milk, and waiting to work till his window panes should have thawed enough to let daylight in. The weather was dry and fine. At this instant, the painter, eating with the patient, resigned look that tells so much, recognized the footfall of a man who had had the influence over his life which people of his class have in the career of most artists—Elias Magus, a picture dealer, an usurer in canvas. And,

in fact, Elias Magus came in, at the moment when the painter was about to begin work in his elaborately clean studio.

"How is yourself, old rascal?" said the painter.

Fougères had won the Cross; Elias bought his pictures for two or three hundred francs, and gave himself the most artistic airs.

"Business is bad," replied Elias. "You all are such lords; you talk of two hundred francs as soon as you have six sous worth of paint on the canvas.—But you are a very good fellow, you are. You are a man of method, and I have come to bring you a good job."

"*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*," said Fougères. "Do you know Latin?"

"No."

"Well, that means that the Greeks did not offer a bit of good business to the Trojans without making something out of it. In those days they used to say, 'Take my horse.' Nowadays we say, 'Take my trash!'—Well, what do you want, Ulysses-Lagingeole-Elias-Magus?"

This speech shows the degree of sweetness and wit which Fougères could put into what painters call studio-chaff.

"I don't say that you will not have to paint me two pictures for nothing."

"Oh! oh!"

"I leave it to you; I do not ask for them. You are an honest artist."

"Indeed?"

"Well. I am bringing you a father, a mother, and an only daughter."

"All unique specimens?"

"My word, yes, indeed!—to have their portraits painted. The worthy folks, crazy about art, have never dared venture into a studio. The daughter will have a hundred thousand francs on her marriage. You may do well to paint such people. Family portraits for yourself, who knows?"

The old German image, who passes muster as a man, and is called Elias Magus, broke off to laugh a dry cackle that horrified the painter. He felt as if he had heard Mephistopheles talking of marriage.

"The portraits are to be five hundred francs apiece; you may give me three pictures."

"Right you are!" said Fougères cheerfully.

"And if you marry the daughter, you will not forget me——"

"Marry? I!" cried Pierre Grassou; "I, who am used to have a bed to myself, to get up early, whose life is all laid out——"

"A hundred thousand francs," said Magus, "and a sweet girl, full of golden lights like a Titian!"

"And what position do these people hold?"

"Retired merchants: in love with the arts at the present moment; they have a country house at Ville-d'Avray, and ten or twelve thousand francs a year."

"What was their business?"

"Bottles."

"Don't speak that word; I fancy I hear corks being cut, and it sets my teeth on edge."

"Well; am I to bring them?"

"Three portraits; I will send them to the Salon; I might go in for portrait-painting.—All right, yes."

And old Elias went downstairs to fetch the Vervelle family.

To understand exactly what the outcome of such a proposal would be on the painter, and the effect produced on him by Monsieur and Madame Vervelle, graced by the addition of their only daughter, it is necessary to glance for a moment at the past life of Pierre Grassou of Fougères. As a pupil, he had learned to draw of Servin, who was regarded in the academical world as a great draughtsman. He afterwards worked under Schinner, to discover the secrets of the powerful and splendid coloring that characterizes that master. The master and his disciples had kept the secrets; Pierre had discovered nothing. From thence Fougères had gone to Sommervieux's studio to familiarize himself with that part of art which is called composition; but composition was shy, and held aloof from him. Then he had tried to steal from Granet and Drolling the mystery of their luminous interiors; the two masters had not allowed him to

rob them. Finally, Fougères had finished his training under Duval-Lecamus.

Through all these studies and various transformations, Fougères' quiet, steady habits had furnished materials for mockery in every studio where he had worked; but he everywhere disarmed his comrades by his diffidence and his lamb-like patience and meekness. The masters had no sympathy with this worthy lad; masters like brilliant fellows, eccentric spirits, farcical and fiery, or gloomy and deeply meditative, promising future talent. Everything in Fougères proclaimed his mediocrity. His nickname of Fougères—the name of the painter in the play by *Fabre d'Églantine*—was the pretext for endless affronts, but by force of circumstances he was saddled with the name of the town “where he first saw the light.”

Grassou de Fougères matched his name. Plump and rather short, he had a dull complexion, brown eyes, black hair, a thick prominent nose, a rather wide mouth, and long ears. His placid, gentle, resigned expression did little to improve these features of a face that was full of health but not of movement. He could never suffer from the flow of blood, the vehemence of thought, or the spirit of comedy by which a great artist is to be known. This youth, born to be a virtuous citizen, had come from his provincial home to serve as shop-clerk to a color-man, a native of Mayenne, distantly related to the d'Orgemonts, and he had made himself a painter by the sheer obstinacy which is the backbone of the Breton character. What he had endured, and the way in which he lived during his period of study, God alone knows. He suffered as much as great men suffer when they are haunted by want, and hunted down like wild beasts by the pack of inferior souls, and the whole army of vanity thirsting for revenge.

As soon as he thought himself strong enough for flight on his own wings, he took a studio at the top of the Rue des Martyrs, and there he began to work. He first sent in a picture in 1819. The picture he offered the jury for their exhibition at the Louvre represented a Village Wedding, a laborious imitation of Greuze's picture. It was re-

fused. When Fougères heard the fatal sentence, he did not fly into those furies or fits of epileptic vanity to which proud spirits are liable, and which sometimes end in a challenge sent to the President or the Secretary, or in threats of assassination. Fougères calmly received his picture back, wrapped it in a handkerchief, and brought it home to his studio, swearing that he would yet become a great painter.

He placed the canvas on the easel and went to call on his old master, a man of immense talent—Schinner—a gentle and patient artist, whose success had been brilliant at the last Salon. He begged him to come and criticize the rejected work. The great painter left everything and went. When poor Fougères had placed him in front of the painting, Schinner at the first glance took Fougères by the hand—

“You are a capital good fellow; you have a heart of gold, it will not be fair to deceive you. Listen; you have kept all the promise you showed at the studio. When a man has such stuff as that at the end of his brush, my good fellow, he had better leave his paints in Brullon’s shop, and not deprive others of the canvas. Get home early, pull on your cotton night-cap, be in bed by nine; and to-morrow morning at ten o’clock go to some office and ask for work, and have done with art.”

“My good friend,” said Fougères, “my picture is condemned already. It is not a verdict that I want, but the reasons for it.”

“Well, then, your tone is gray and cold; you see nature through a crape veil; your drawing is heavy and clumsy; your composition is borrowed from Greuze, who only redeemed his faults by qualities which you have not.”

As he pointed out the faults of the picture, Schinner saw in Fougères’ face so deep an expression of grief that he took him away to dine, and tried to comfort him.

Next day, by seven in the morning, Fougères, before his easel, was working over the condemned canvas; he warmed up the colour, made the corrections suggested by Schinner, and touched up the figures. Then, sick of such patching, he took it to Elias Magus. Elias Magus, being a sort of Dutch-Belgian-Fleming, had three reasons for being what

he was—miserly and rich. He had lately come from Bordeaux, and was starting in business in Paris as a picture-dealer; he lived on the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle. Fougères, who trusted to his palette to take him to the baker's, bravely ate bread and walnuts, or bread and milk, or bread and cherries, or bread and cheese, according to the season. Elias Magus, to whom Pierre offered his first picture, eyed it for a long time, and then gave him fifteen francs.

"Taking fifteen francs a year and spending a thousand, I shall go fast and far," said Fougères, smiling.

Elias Magus gave a shrug and bit his thumb at the thought that he might have had the picture for five francs. Every morning, for some days, Fougères went down the Rue des Martyrs, lost himself in the crowd on the Boulevard opposite Magus' shop, and fixed his eyes on his picture—which did not attract the gaze of the passers-by. Towards the end of the week the picture disappeared. Fougères wandered up the boulevard towards the picture-dealer's shop with an affectation of amusing himself. The Jew was standing in the doorway.

"Well, you have sold my picture?"

"There it is," said Magus. "I am having it framed to show to some man who fancies himself knowing in paintings."

Fougères did not dare come along the boulevard any more. He began a new picture; for two months he labored at it, feeding like a mouse and working like a galley-slave. One evening he walked out on the boulevard; his feet carried him involuntarily to Magus' shop; he could nowhere see his picture.

"I have sold your picture," said the dealer to the artist.

"For how much?"

"I got my money back with a little interest. Paint me some Flemish interiors, an Anatomy lecture, a landscape; I will take them of you," said Elias.

Fougères could have hugged Magus in his arms; he looked upon him as a father. He went home with joy in his heart. Then Schinner, the great Schinner, was mistaken! In that vast city of Paris there were some hearts that beat in unison

with that of Grassou; his talent was discerned and appreciated!

The poor fellow, at seven-and-twenty, had the artlessness of a boy of sixteen. Anyone else, one of your distrustful, suspicious artists, would have noticed Elias' diabolical expression, have seen the quiver of his beard, the ironical curl of his mustache, the action of his shoulders, all betraying the satisfaction of Walter Scott's Jew cheating a Christian. Fougères paraded the boulevards with a joy that gave his face an expression of pride. He looked like a schoolboy protecting a woman. He met Joseph Bridau, one of his fellow-students, one of those eccentric men of genius who are predestined to glory and disaster. Joseph Bridau, having a few sous in his pocket, as he expressed it, took Fougères to the opera. Fougères did not see the ballet, did not hear the music; he was imagining pictures, he was painting.

He left Joseph half-way through the evening, and ran home to make sketches by lamp-light; he invented thirty pictures, full of reminiscences, and believed himself a genius. Next day he bought some colors and canvases of various sizes; he spread out some bread and some cheese on his table; he got some water in a jug, and a store of wood for his stove; then, to use the studio phrase, he pegged away at his painting; he employed a few models, and Magus lent him draperies. After two months of seclusion, the Breton had finished four pictures. He again asked Schinner's advice, with the addition of Joseph Bridau's. The two painters found these works to be a servile imitation of Dutch landscapes, of Metzu's interiors, and the fourth was a version of Rembrandt's *Anatomy lecture*.

"Always imitations!" said Schinner. "Ah, Fougères would find it hard to be original."

"You ought to turn your attention to something else than painting," said Bridau.

"To what?" said Fougères.

"Go in for literature."

Fougères bent his head as sheep do before rain. Then he asked and got some practical advice, touched up his paintings, and carried them to Elias. Elias gave him twenty-

five francs for each. At this price Fougères made nothing. He took some walks to see what became of his pictures, and had a singular hallucination. His works, so firmly painted, so neat, as hard as tin-plate iron, and as shining as painting on porcelain, seemed to be covered with a fog; they looked quite like old masters.

Elias had just gone out; Fougères could obtain no information as to this phenomenon. He thought his eyes deceived him.

The painter went home to his studio to make new old masters. After seven years of constant work, Fougères was able to compose and paint fairly good pictures. He did as well as all the other artists of the second class. Elias bought and sold all the poor Breton's pictures, while he laboriously earned a hundred louis a year, and did not spend more than twelve hundred francs.

At the Exhibition of 1829, Léon de Lora, Schinner, and Bridau, who all three filled a large space, and were at the head of the new movement in art, took pity on their old comrade's perseverance and poverty; they managed to get a picture by Fougères accepted and hung in the great room. This work, of thrilling interest, recalling Vigneron in its sentiment, and Dubufe's early manner in its execution, represented a young man in prison having the back of his head shaved. On one side stood a priest, on the other a young woman in tears. A lawyer's clerk was reading an official document. On a wretched table stood a meal which no one had eaten. The light came in through the bars of a high window. It was enough to make the good folks shudder, and they shuddered.

Fougères had borrowed directly from Gerard Dow's masterpiece: he had turned the group of the *Dropsical Woman* towards the window instead of facing the spectator. He had put the condemned prisoner in the place of the dying woman—the same pallor, the same look, the same appeal to heaven. Instead of the Dutch physician, there was the rigid official figure of the clerk dressed in black; but he had added an old woman by the side of Gerard Dow's young girl. The cruelly good-humored face of the executioner crowned

the group. This plagiarism, skillfully concealed, was not recognized.

The catalogue contained these words:—

510, GRASSOU DE FOUGÈRES (PIERRE), Rue de Navarin, 2.

The Chouan's Toilet; condemned to Death, 1809.

Though quite mediocre the picture had a prodigious success, for it reminded the spectators of the affair of the robbers—known as the *Chauffeurs*—of Mortagne. A crowd collected every day in front of the picture, which became the fashion, and Charles X. stopped to look at it. Madame, having heard of the poor Breton's patient life, grew enthusiastic about him. The Duc d'Orléans asked the price of the painting. The priests told Madame the Dauphiness that the work was full of pious feeling; it had no doubt a very satisfactory suggestion of religion. Monseigneur the Dauphin admired the dust on the window panes, a stupid, dull mistake, for what Fougères had intended was a greenish tone, which spoke of damp at the bottom of the walls. Madame bought the picture for a thousand francs, and the Dauphin gave a commission for another. Charles X. bestowed the Cross on this son of a peasant who had fought for the Royal Cause in 1799; Joseph Bridau, a great painter, was not decorated. The Minister of the Interior ordered two sacred pictures for the church at Fougères. This Salon was to Pierre Grassou fortune, glory, a future, and life.

To invent in any kind is to die by inches; to copy is to live. Having at last discovered a vein full of gold, Grassou of Fougères practiced that part of this barbarous maxim to which the world owes the atrocious mediocrity whose duty it is to elect its superiors in every class of society, but which naturally elects itself, and wages pitiless war against all real talent. The principle of election universally applied is a bad one; France will get over it. At the same time, Fougères was so gentle and kind that his modesty, his simplicity, and his astonishment silenced recriminations and envy. Then, again, he had on his side the successful Grassous, representing all the Grassous to come. Some people,

touched by the energy of a man whom nothing had discouraged, spoke of Domenichino, and said, "Hard work in the arts must be rewarded. Grassou has earned his success. He has been pegging at it for ten years, poor old fellow!"

This exclamation, "poor old fellow!" counted for a great deal in the support and congratulations the painter received. Pity elevates as many second-rate talents as envy runs down great artists. The newspapers had not been sparing of criticism, but the Chevalier Fougères took it all as he took his friend's advice, with angelic patience. Rich now, with fifteen thousand francs very hardly earned, he furnished his rooms and his studio in the Rue de Navarin, he painted the picture ordered by Monseigneur the Dauphin, and the two sacred works commanded by the Minister, finishing them to the day, with a punctuality perfectly distracting to the cashier of the Ministry, accustomed to quite other ways. But note the good luck of methodical people! If he had delayed, Grassou, overtaken by the revolution of July, would never have been paid.

By the time he was seven-and-thirty Fougères had manufactured for Elias Magus about two hundred pictures, all perfectly unknown, but by which he had gained with practice that satisfactory handling, that pitch of dexterity at which an artist shrugs his shoulders, and which is dear to the Philistine. Fougères was loved by his friends for his rectitude of mind and steadfastness of feeling, for his perfectly obliging temper and loyal spirit; though they had no respect for his palette, they were attached to the man who held it.

"What a pity that Fougères should indulge in the vice of painting!" his friends would say.

Grassou, however, could give sound advice, like the newspaper writers, who are incapable of producing a book, but who know full well where a book is faulty. But there was a difference between Fougères and these literary critics; he was keenly alive to every beauty, he acknowledged it, and his advice was stamped with a sense of justice which made his strictures acceptable.

After the revolution of July Fougères sent in ten or more paintings to every exhibition, of which the jury would

accept four or five. He lived with the strictest economy, and his whole household consisted of a woman to manage the housework. His amusements lay solely in visits to his friends, and in going to see works of art; he treated himself to some little tours in France, and dreamed of seeking inspiration in Switzerland. This wretched artist was a good citizen; he served in the Guard, turned out for inspection, and paid his rent and bills with the vulgarest punctuality. Having lived in hard work and penury, he had never had time to be in love. A bachelor and poor, up to the present day he had had no wish to complicate his simple existence.

Having no idea of any way of increasing his wealth, he took his savings and his earnings every quarter to his notary, Cardot. When the notary had a thousand crowns in hand, he invested them in a first mortgage, with substitution in favor of the wife's rights if the borrower should marry, or in favor of the seller if the borrower should wish to pay it off. The notary drew the interest and added it to the sums deposited by Grassou de Fougères. The painter looked forward to the happy day when his investments should reach the imposing figure of two thousand francs a year, when he would indulge in the *otium cum dignitate* of an artist and paint pictures—oh! but such pictures! Real pictures, finished pictures—something like, clipping, stunning! His fondest hope, his dream of joy, the climax of all his hopes—would you like to know it? It was to be elected to the Institute and wear the rosette of the officers of the Legion of Honor! To sit by Schinner and Léon de Lora! To get into the Academy before Bridau! To have a rosette in his button-hole.—What a vision! Only your commonplace mind can think of everything.

On hearing several footsteps on the stairs, Fougères pushed his fingers through his top-knot of hair, buttoned his bottle-green waistcoat, and was not a little surprised at the entrance of a face of the kind known in the studio as a *melon*. This fruit was perched on a pumpkin dressed in blue cloth, and graced with a dangling bunch of jingling

seals. The melon snorted like a porpoise, the pumpkin walked on turnips incorrectly called legs. A real artist would at once have sketched such a caricature of the bottle merchant and then have shown him out, saying that he did not paint vegetables. Fougères looked at his customer without laughing, for M. Vervelle wore in his shirt-front a diamond worth a thousand crowns. Fougères glanced at Magus, and said in the studio slang of the day, "A fat job," meaning that the worthy was rich.

M. Vervelle heard it and frowned. He brought in his train some other vegetable combinations in the persons of his wife and daughter. The wife had in her face a fine mahogany tone; she looked like a cocoa-nut surmounted by a head and tightened in with a belt; she twirled round on her feet; her dress was yellow, with black stripes. She proudly displayed absurd mittens on a pair of hands as swollen as a glover's sign. The feathers of a first-class funeral waved over a coal-scuttle bonnet; lace frills covered a figure as round behind as before, thus the spherical form of the cocoa-nut was perfect. Her feet, which a painter would have termed hoofs, had a garnish of half-an-inch of fat projecting beyond her patent-leather shoes. How had her feet been got into the shoes? Who can tell?

Behind her came a young asparagus shoot, green and yellow as to her dress, with a small head covered with hair in flat braids of a carrotty yellow which a Roman would have adored, thread-paper arms, a fairly white but freckled skin, large innocent eyes, with colorless lashes and faintly marked eyebrows, a Leghorn straw hat, trimmed with a couple of honest white satin bows, and bound with white satin, virtuously red hands, and feet like her mother's.

These three persons, as they looked round the studio, had a look of beatitude which showed a highly respectable enthusiasm for art.

"And it is you, sir, who are going to take our likenesses?" said the father, assuming a little dashing air.

"Yes, sir," replied Grassou.

"Vervelle, he has the Cross," said the wife to her husband in a whisper while the painter's back was turned.

"Should I have our portraits painted by an artist who was not 'decorated'?" retorted the bottle-merchant.

Elias Magus bowed to the Vervelle family and went away. Grassou followed him on to the landing.

"Who but you would have discovered such a set of phizzes?"

"A hundred thousand francs in settlement!"

"Yes, but what a family!"

"And three hundred thousand francs in expectations, a house in the Rue Boucherat, and a country place at Ville d'Avray."

"Boucherat, bottles, bumpkins, and bounce!" said the painter.

"You will be out of want for the rest of your days," said Elias.

This idea flashed into Pierre Grassou's brain as the morning light had broken on his attic. As he placed the young lady's father in position, he thought him really good-looking, and admired his face with its strong purple tones. The mother and daughter hovered round the painter, wondering at all his preparations; to them he seemed a god. This visible adoration was pleasing to Fougères. The golden calf cast its fantastic reflection on this family.

"You must earn enormous sums; but you spend it as fast as you get it?" said the mother.

"No, Madame," replied the painter, "I do not spend. I have not means to amuse myself. My notary invests my money; he knows what I have, and when once the money is in his hands I think no more about it."

"And I have always been told that painters were a thriftless set!" said father Vervelle.

"Who is your notary, if it is not too great a liberty?" said Madame Vervelle.

"A capital fellow all round—Cardot."

"Lord! lord! Isn't that funny now!" said Vervelle.

"Why, Cardot is ours too."

"Do not move," said the painter.

"Sit still, do, Anténor," said his wife; "you will put the

gentleman out; if you could see him working you would understand."

"Gracious me, why did you never have me taught art?" said Mademoiselle Vervelle to her parents.

"Virginie!" exclaimed her mother, "there are certain things a young lady cannot learn. When you are married—well and good. Till then be content."

In the course of this first sitting the Vervelle family became almost intimate with the worthy artist. They were to come again two days after. As they left, the father and mother desired Virginie to go first; but in spite of the distance between them, she heard these words, of which the meaning must have roused her curiosity:—

"*Décoré*—thirty-seven—an artist who gets commissions, and places his money in our notary's hands. We will consult Cardot. Madame de Fougères, heh! not a bad name! He does not look like a bad fellow! A man of business, you would say? But so long as a merchant has not retired from business, you can never tell what your daughter may come to; while an artist who saves.—And then we are fond of art.—Well, well!——"

While the Vervelles were discussing him, Pierre Grassou was thinking of the Vervelles. He found it impossible to remain quietly in his studio; he walked up and down the boulevard, looking at every red-haired woman who went by! He argued with himself in the strangest way: Gold was the most splendid of the metals, yellow stood for gold; the ancient Romans liked red-haired women, and he became a Roman, and so forth. After being married two years, what does a man care for his wife's complexion? Beauty fades—but ugliness remains! Money is half of happiness. That evening, when he went to bed, the painter had already persuaded himself that Virginie Vervelle was charming.

When the trio walked in on the day fixed for the second sitting, the artist received them with an amiable smile. The rogue had shaved, had put on a clean white shirt; he had chosen a becoming pair of trousers, and red slippers with Turkish toes. The family responded with a smile as flattering as the artist's; Virginie turned as red as her hair,

dropped her eyes, and turned away her head, looking at the studies. Pierre Grassou thought these little affectations quite bewitching. Virginie was graceful; happily, she was like neither father nor mother. But whom was she like?

"Ah, I see," said he to himself; "the mother has had an eye to business."

During the sitting there was a war of wits between the family and the painter, who was so audacious as to say that father Vervelle was witty. After this piece of flattery the family took possession of the painter's heart in double-quick time; he gave one of his drawings to Virginie, and a sketch to her mother.

"For nothing?" they asked.

Pierre Grassou could not help smiling.

"You must not give your works away like this; they are money," said Vervelle.

At the third sitting old Vervelle spoke of a fine collection of pictures he had in his country house at Ville d'Avray—Rubens, Gerard Dow, Mieris, Terburg, Rembrandt, a Titian, Paul Potter, etc.

"M. Vervelle has been frightfully extravagant," said Madame Vervelle pompously. "He has a hundred thousand francs' worth of pictures."

"I am fond of the arts," said the bottle-merchant.

When Madame Vervelle's portrait was begun, that of her husband was nearly finished. The enthusiasm of the family now knew no bounds. The notary had praised the artist in the highest terms. Pierre Grassou was in his opinion the best fellow on earth, one of the steadiest of artists, who had indeed saved thirty-six thousand francs; his days of poverty were past, he was making ten thousand francs a year, he was reinvesting his interest, and he was incapable of making a woman unhappy. This last sentence was of great weight in the scale. The friends of the family heard nothing talked of but the celebrated Fougères.

By the time Fougères began the portrait of Virginie he was already the son-in-law elect of the Vervelle couple. The trio expanded in this studio, which they had begun to regard as a home; there was an inexplicable attraction to

them in this cleaned, cared-for, neat, artistic spot. *Abyssus abyssum*, like to like.

Towards the end of the sitting the stairs were shaken, the door was flung open, and in came Joseph Bridau; he rode the whirlwind, his hair was flying; in he came with his broad, deeply-seamed face, shot lightning glances all round the room, and came suddenly up to Grassou, pulling his coat across the gastric region, and trying to button it, but in vain, for the button mold had escaped from its cloth cover.

"Times are bad," he said to Grassou.

"Hah?"

"The duns are at my heels.—Hallo! are you painting that sort of thing?"

"Hold your tongue!"

"To be sure——"

The Vervelle family, excessively taken aback by this apparition, turned from the usual red to the cherry scarlet of a fierce fire.

"It pays," said Joseph. "Have you any shot in your locker?"

"Do you want much?"

"A five-hundred-franc note. . . . There is a party after me of the bloodhound kind, who, when once they have set their teeth, do not let go without having the piece out. What a set!"

"I will give you a line to my notary——"

"What! you have a notary?"

"Yes."

"Then that accounts for your still painting cheeks rose-pink, only fit for a hairdresser's doll!"

Grassou could not help reddening, for Virginie was sitting to him.

"Paint nature as it is," the great painter went on. "Mademoiselle is red-haired. Well, is that a deadly sin? Everything is fine in painting. Squeeze me out some cinna-bar, warm up those cheeks, give me those little brown freckles, butter your canvas boldly! Do you want to do better than Nature?"

"Here," said Fougères, "take my place while I write."

Vervelle waddled to the writing-table and spoke in Grassou's ear.

"That interfering muddler will spoil it," said the bottle-merchant.

"If he would paint your Virginie's portrait, it would be worth a thousand of mine," replied Fougères indignantly.

On hearing this, the good man quietly beat a retreat to join his wife, who sat bewildered at the invasion of this wild beast, and not at all happy at seeing him co-operating in her daughter's portrait.

"There, carry out those hints," said Bridau, returning the palette, and taking the note. "I will not thank you.—I can get back to D'Arthez' château; I am painting a dining-room for him, and Léon de Lora is doing panels over the doors—masterpieces. Come and see us!"

He went off without bowing even, so sick was he of looking at Virginie.

"Who is that man?" asked Madame Vervelle.

"A great artist," replied Grassou.

There was a moment's silence.

"Are you quite sure," said Virginie, "that he has brought no ill-luck to my portrait? . . . He frightened me."

"He has only improved it," said Grassou.

"If he is a great artist, I prefer a great artist like you," said Madame de Vervelle.

"Oh, mamma, Monsieur Fougères is a much greater artist. He will take me full length," remarked Virginie.

The eccentricities of genius had scared those steady-going Philistines.

The year had now reached that pleasant autumn season prettily called Saint-Martin's summer. It was with the shyness of a neophyte in the presence of a man of genius that Vervelle ventured to invite Grassou to spend the following Sunday at his country-house. He knew how little attraction a *bourgeois* family could offer to an artist.

"You artists," said he, "must have excitement, fine scenes, and clever company. But I can give you some good wine,

and I rely on my pictures to make up for the dullness an artist like you must feel among trades-folk."

This worship, which greatly soothed his vanity, delighted poor Pierre Grassou, who was little used to such compliments. This worthy artist, this ignominious mediocrity, this heart of gold, this loyal soul, this blundering draughtsman, this best of good fellows, displaying the Cross of the Royal Order of the Legion of Honor, got himself up with care to go and enjoy the last fine day of the year at Ville-d'Avray. The painter arrived unpretentiously by the public conveyance, and could not help admiring the bottle-merchant's handsome residence placed in the midst of a park of about five acres, at the top of the hill, and the best point of view. To marry Virginie meant owning this fine house some day!

He was received by the Vervelles with an enthusiasm, a delight, a genuine heartiness, a simple, commonplace stupidity that overpowered him. It was a day of triumph. The future son-in-law was taken to walk along the nankeen-colored paths, which had been raked, as was due, for a great man. The very trees looked as if they had been brushed and combed, the lawns were mown. The pure country air diluted kitchen odors of the most comforting character. Everything in the house proclaimed, "We have a great artist here!" Little father Vervelle rolled about his paddock like an apple, the daughter wriggled after him like an eel, and the mother followed with great dignity. For seven hours these three beings never released Grassou.

After a dinner, of which the length matched the splendor, Monsieur and Madame Vervelle came to their grand surprise—the opening of the picture gallery, lighted up by lamps carefully arranged for effect. Three neighbors, all retired business men, an uncle from whom they had expectations, invited in honor of the great artist, an old Aunt Vervelle, and the other guests followed Grassou into the gallery, all curious to hear his opinion of little Daddy Vervelle's famous collection, for he overpowered them by the fabulous value of his pictures. The bottle-merchant seemed to wish to vie with King Louis-Philippe and the galleries of Versailles.

The pictures, splendidly framed, bore tickets, on which might be read in black letters on a gold label:—

RUBENS

A Dance of Fauns and Nymphs

REMBRANDT

*Interior of a Dissecting-room**Doctor Tromp Giving a Lesson to His Pupils*

There were a hundred and fifty pictures, all varnished and dusted; a few had green curtains over them, not to be raised in the presence of the young person.

The artist stood with limp arms and a gaping mouth, without a word on his lips, as he recognized in this gallery half his own works; he, He was Rubens, Paul Potter, Mieris, Metzu, Gerard Dow! He alone was twenty great masters!

“What is the matter? you look pale.”

“Daughter, a glass of water!” cried Madame Verville.

The painter took the old man by the button of his coat and led him into a corner, under pretense of examining a Murillo.—Spanish pictures were then the fashion.

“You bought your pictures of Elias Magus?” said he.

“Yes. All original works.”

“Between ourselves, what did he make you pay for those I will point out to you?”

The couple went round the gallery. The guests were amazed at the solemnity with which the artist, following his host, examined all these masterpieces.

“Three thousand francs!” exclaimed Verville in an undertone, as he came to the last. “But I tell you forty thousand francs!”

“Forty thousand francs for a Titian!” said the artist aloud; “why, it is dirt-cheap!”

“When I told you I had a hundred thousand crowns’ worth of pictures——” exclaimed Verville.

“I painted every one of those pictures,” said Pierre Gras-

sou in his ear; "and I did not get more than ten thousand francs for the whole lot."

"Prove it," replied the bottle-merchant, "and I will double my daughter's settlements; for in that case you are Rubens, Rembrandt, Terburg, Titian!"

"And Magus is something like a picture-dealer!" added the painter, who could account for the antique look of the pictures, and the practical end of the subjects ordered by the dealer.

Far from falling in his admirer's estimation, M. de Fougères—for so the family insisted on calling Pierre Grassou—rose so high that he painted his family for nothing, and of course presented the portraits to his father-in-law, his mother-in-law, and his wife.

Pierre Grassou, who never misses a single exhibition, is now regarded in the Philistine world as a very good portrait-painter. He earns about twelve thousand francs a year, and spoils about five hundred francs' worth of canvas. His wife had six thousand francs a year on her marriage, and they live with her parents. The Vervelles and the Grassous, who get on perfectly well together, keep a carriage, and are the happiest people on earth. Pierre Grassou moves in a commonplace circle, where he is considered one of the greatest artists of the period. Not a family portrait is ordered between the Barrière du Trône and the Rue du Temple that is not the work of this great painter, or that costs less than five hundred francs. The great reason why the townsfolks employ this artist is this: "Say what you like, he invests twenty thousand francs a year through his notary."

As Grassou behaved very well in the riots of the 12th of May, he has been promoted to be an officer of the Legion of Honor. He is major in the National Guard. The Versailles gallery was bound to order a battle-scene of so worthy a citizen, who forthwith walked all about Paris to meet his old comrades, and to say with an air of indifference, "The King has ordered me to paint a battle!"

Madame de Fougères adores her husband, whom she has presented with two children. The painter, however, a good

father and a good husband, cannot altogether get rid of a haunting thought: other painters make fun of him; his name is a term of contempt in every studio; the newspapers never notice his works. Still, he works on, and is making his way to the Academy; he will be admitted. And then—a revenge that swells his heart with pride—he buys pictures by famous artists when they are in difficulties, and he is replacing the daubs at the Ville d'Avray by real masterpieces—not of his own painting.

There are mediocrities more vexatious and more spiteful than that of Pierre Grassou, who is in fact anonymously benevolent and perfectly obliging.

PARIS, *December 1839.*



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